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INDIA TODAY

JANUARY 15, 1983

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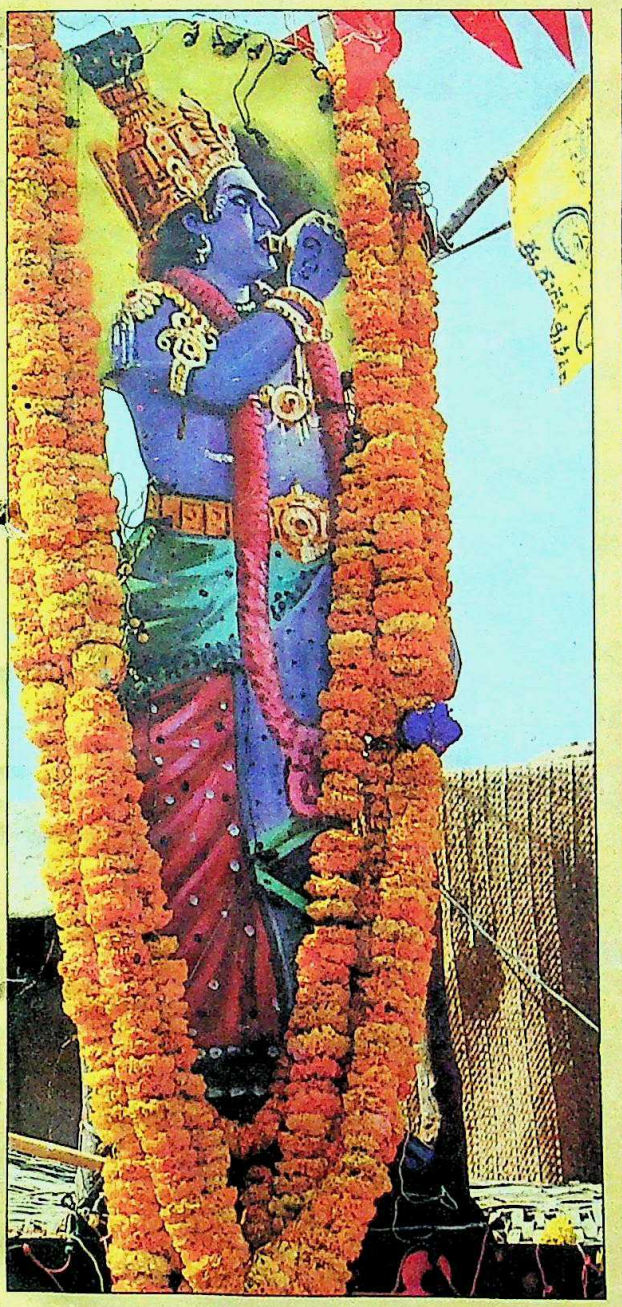

IMAGES OF N.T. RAMA RAO AND MRS GANDHI

ANDHRA PRADESH: EXCLUSIVE ELECTION FORECAST

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INDIA TODAY
THE CONCISE NEWSMAGAZINE

VOLUME VIII NUMBER 1
FOR THE FORTNIGHT JANUARY 1-15, 1983

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

AMBITIOUS undertakings often have small beginnings. So it was with the election survey featured in this issue. Undoubtedly, the elections scheduled for next week in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka set off some lively debate in the offices of INDIA TODAY, *just as they did at street corners, coffee houses and media rooms throughout the country. While it was clear that the play of cards remained more or less unchanging in Karnataka, there was for the first time a joker in the Andhra pack. This looming question mark was in the shape of film star N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) and his Telugu Desam party, who in the past few months had stormed their way to the centre-stage of Andhra Pradesh politics, and was featured on an* INDIA TODAY *cover (October 15, 1982) in recognition of this.*

With opinion sharply divided on how well NTR would do in the election battle, the magazine decided to turn to professional psephologists to try and find the answer. Exactly three years ago, PRANNOY ROY *and* ASHOK LAHIRI, *scholars at the Delhi School of Economics, had constructed an election model and forecast with remarkable accuracy the results of the 1980 Lok Sabha elections which brought Mrs Indira Gandhi and the Congress(I) storming back to power (*INDIA TODAY, *January 1–15, 1980). The task this time round was less ambitious, restricted as it was to just one state, but there was a great deal to be done in the barely three weeks that were left to deadline when the green light was given.*

*Roy and Lahiri chose the constituencies and the Indian Market Research Bureau (*IMRB*) who are regular pollsters for* INDIA TODAY *sampled 2,300 voters in scientifically chosen locations to give the basic raw data for the forecast. This data was analysed and fed into a computer for the appropriate results. Owing to the complexity of the task the polling had to be done fairly early in the campaign, and does not account for the last minute surges and changes of fortune that usually occur in any election. Even so, this is only the second time that such an exercise has been attempted in the country. One reason for this is, of course, that election forecasting is a difficult business, the methodology for which is new to India. Another is that it is an exceedingly hazardous business. Though* INDIA TODAY*'s last forecast was correct, other pollsters have been known to go completely wrong. In spite of the attendant risks,* INDIA TODAY *believes that this scientific method is the only appropriate way of anticipating election results.*

To write the story of the campaign Managing Editor SUMAN DUBEY *and Principal Correspondent* PRABHU CHAWLA *travelled to Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh to join Correspondents* RAJ CHENGAPPA *and* AMARNATH K. MENON. *Picture Editor* RAGHU RAI *travelled to Andhra Pradesh where he drove almost 2,000 km in three days to track Mrs Gandhi, Rajiv and NTR on their campaign trails. Said Rai, who has covered almost every major election in the country: "Whether he wins or not, I have yet to see anybody handle crowds better than NTR."*

IN THIS issue, the magazine carries the first of a series of reports on the India-Pakistan cricket tests now under way in Pakistan. To write the series, INDIA TODAY *commissioned veteran cricketer and former India test captain* BISHEN SINGH BEDI *to travel to Pakistan and write the reports. Bedi, who earlier wrote about the Indian cricket tour of England last summer, will bring a very special perspective to bear on his reports, writing not only about the game but giving a personal assessment of each match, its highs and lows and the performance of the two teams.*

Finally, INDIA TODAY *wishes all its readers a Happy New Year.*

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CRITICAL PHASE

The crisis in which the Congress(I) currently finds itself is largely one of its own making ('Testing Time Ahead', December 31). By concentrating power in the hands of one individual it has actively contributed to a situation in which it finds itself surrounded by mediocrities struggling for a piece of the cake.

Pune *Purnendu Kavoori*

■ This is the umpteenth time that your magazine has featured Mrs Gandhi on its cover (December 31). That the use of yet another picture of hers is a tired tactic is quite clear. The wordy explanation that was found necessary to justify the choice nevertheless sounded quite unconvincing. If the choice was "obvious', it was due to poor imagination.

Bombay *Jagdish R. Rattanani*

POPULAR ACCLAIM

"A Moment Of Pride" (December 15) missed none of the details of the spectacular Asian event. India's achievements in organising the Games with such perfection is highly creditable and speaks volumes for the tremendous effort that was put in.

New Delhi *Subir Vyas*

■ In its coverage of the IX Asiad INDIA TODAY has done better than any of our sports magazines be it in photographs, analysis or reporting.

Calcutta *Sunil Garodia*

■ I have never been terribly enthusiastic about sports but INDIA TODAY and Doordarshan have changed my attitude. The masterly presentation of the Games by the media has made me an ardent fan.

Calcutta *Brinda Roy*

■ Colossal sums of money have been spent on this spectacle which could have been much better utilised for developmental work. Only a nation that has been able to provide the basic amenities to its citizens can afford an extravaganza like this one.

Baroda *C.M. Pandit*

■ The action of M.L. Jadam in making Chand Ram bow before Rajiv Gandhi is shameful. If he wanted to prove his devotion to Rajiv why didn't he touch the young MP's feet? And why didn't Rajiv stop this sycophantic act? I think Jadam should be made to apologise publicly to Chand Ram.

Bangalore *Sudhir Kumar*

■ As an old Rajputana Rifleman I emphatically protest the treatment meted out to Chand Ram. Will someone tell that blundering officer of the AAFI that no soldier ever touches the feet of anyone for any kind of blessing—and especially not a soldier from a fighting unit like the Rajputana Rifles.

Palghat *Chandroo Kunneth*

■ The huge cost of staging the Games is entirely justified since the results are far reaching, nationally and internationally. Let the cynics bite the dust!

Vishakhapatnam *Raveendra Nath*

■ I think INDIA TODAY should now bring out a comprehensive volume, with photographs and articles from all three issues. This volume is sure to be a sell-out.

Jamnagar *K. Kumar*

■ Why does there always have to be a man like Jadam to blemish an otherwise flawless event?

Jaunpur *Manoj Kumar Singh*

■ It is unfortunate that INDIA TODAY, too, has got onto the media bandwagon and has gone all out in praise of the Asiad. The Games were symbolic of our misplaced priorities and the prime minister is like Nero who fiddled while Rome burnt.

Madras *K. Mohan*

■ The photographs used with the articles were the best I have seen anywhere. I think your team of photographers have done an excellent job.

Durgapur *Ranjit Sengupta*

ETHICAL TRIUMPH

INDIA TODAY deserves credit for its investigative report on "The Meridien Controversy" (December 15). The report outlines clearly the dirty games indulged in by businessmen. And it proves that not

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all sections [illegible] the media can be intimidated [illegible] man though he has both business acumen [illegible] political clout.

Bhubaneswar *Ganeshwar Sahu*

■ It is the duty of the press to expose the unethical doings of public figures—be they politicians or businessmen. It is good to know that INDIA TODAY is so steadfast in doing this duty.

Rourkela *Saroj Kumar Mishra*

■ It came as an agreeable surprise when the magazine won its case against Charanjit Singh. This proves conclusively that we have a sound legal system and judges who cannot be accused of kow-towing to anybody.

Hyderabad *Atul Kumar*

FAINT PRAISE

I was shocked to see that the death of Vinoba Bhave merited only a mention in the "Signposts" (December 15) column. The Acharya was the last of a generation that fought actively for freedom and he deserved at least two pages.

Madras *S.M. Sivaraman*

CLEVER MOVE

Mrs Gandhi has again proved that she can outmanoeuvre the Opposition every time ("Shrewd Timing", December 15). But she should know that she cannot survive solely on her shrewdness—she must also show results on the economic front.

Baduria *P.K. Biswas*

■ The article assessed the coming assembly elections very well. But the photograph captioned V. Bhaskara Reddy was of B. Venkatram.

Secunderabad *Mandava Kiran Babu*

LAISSEZ FAIRE

The economic analysis in "The Pangs Of Growth" (December 15) is pragmatic. If we draw a lesson from post-war economies then it become obvious that all centralised economies have failed and the free market ones have done very well. India still has time to make the change.

Dattapukur *B.L. Saha*

MONEY'S WORTH

I usually hesitate to buy INDIA TODAY because of its price but this issue made up for the cost. I was very pleased to see a new feature 'Letter From Paris' ("How Mitterrandism Works", December 15). It is so unusual to find news from an European city in the Indian media—I hope these reports from France continue.

Howrah *S.K. Bhattacharya*

THE EXPLOITERS

If the acts of the Goa Samaj are branded chauvinistic ("Rising Chauvinism", December 15) what would you call the non-Goans who infiltrated into this state and turned our beautiful towns into slums? For years the contractors and other businessmen have brought in cheap labour from neighbouring states and only now has the government taken cognisance.

Salcete *L.A. Veiga*

WHEN JUDGES MISJUDGE

The article "A Battle Supreme" (December 15) was interesting. It is a matter of shame that the judges of the Supreme Court should form separate factions and thereby become biased while handing out justice. It is time the justices of the highest court realise that they have made laughing-stocks of themselves.

Hyderabad *Atul Borgaonkar*

CONCERNED CITIZENS

We at the India Development Service (IDS) appreciated the coverage done by the magazine in "Beacon Of Hope" (December 15), but I think a very important feature of the IDS was not adequately presented—the involvement of urban volunteers with strong commitment and concern for social justice. These persons form the most crucial aspect of our strategy in building an alternate structure. Without their involvement the work of the IDS would have been very difficult.

Medleri *S.R. Hiremath*

MISSING THE MARK

The article "Cause Celebre" (November 30) was shockingly biased. After starting out with some good reports on Tamil Nadu one did not expect this kind of article. There are so many stories crying out to be done here and you had to pick on one that centres around people who deserve no defence.

Madras *R.V. Chidambaram*

SOMNOLENT PRESS

"An Affair To Remember" (November 30) pointed to not just the sad happenings in the *Indian Express* but also to the depressing state of Indian journalism. The article calls Arun Shourie "the most devastating chronicler of our times". This when Shourie was doing what every journalist in the country should have been doing! It means that the Indian press has failed in its duty as the keeper of the nation's conscience; why then should they clamour for freedom?

Bombay *Anand Rajadhyaksha*

BE WARNED

Your article "The Bitter [illegible] (October 31) was full of inaccuracie[illegible] medical representatives do not p[illegible] Secrodyl for diagnosis of pregnanc[illegible] stopped in 1976. The prom[illegible] literature they show to the doctors [illegible] the drug is not to be used fo[illegible] purpose. Our packs of Secrodyl car[illegible] warning.

Our literature on Ancoloxin ha[illegible] mid-1978 been identical to that [illegible] parent company, and it carries an id[illegible] warning. So it is not true that this [illegible] sold in India for what Glaxo in U[illegible] against.

Pharmaceutical compendiums [illegible] private, unofficial publications. We [illegible] no control over the contents of [illegible] compendiums as, in most cases [illegible] information has not been supplied b[illegible]

You have omitted the rationale f[illegible] the statement "it is irrational to sa[illegible] because a drug is misused, it shou[illegible] banned".

It was said because there are [illegible] drugs—antibiotics, tranquilisers, [illegible] killers—which are being misused [illegible] one has asked for a ban because [illegible] like the oestrogen-progestogen one [illegible] extremely useful. The problem, if [illegible] needs to be tackled at the level o[illegible] prescriber.

Dr M. Pai[illegible]
Vice-president, medical res[illegible]

Bombay Glaxo Laboratories (India[illegible]

Our correspondent asked Dr Ana[illegible] Glaxo's promotional literature on Sec[illegible] but he insisted that Glaxo had not p[illegible] any such literature in the last few [illegible] When he was asked to show the [illegible] show-cards and pamphlets used b[illegible] medical representatives, he professed [illegible] inability to do so. Against this, [illegible] leading pharmaceutical compe[illegible] recommended Secrodyl for pre[illegible] diagnosis till 1980–1981. Anand sa[illegible] company is not responsible for [illegible] publications, but it is well-known th[illegible] information's based on what is pro[illegible] the companies. Anand in fact keeps [illegible] of these in his office and is aware of [illegible] they print. Glaxo also advertises i[illegible] concerned publication.

As for the literature on Ancoloxi[illegible] pack we bought from the market is [illegible] January 1982 and carries no warni[illegible] any sort. Anand showed the correspon[illegible] sample pack which does carry the wa[illegible] but this is still to be used on[illegible] manufactured drug although two year[illegible] the company had confessed to [illegible] administrative failure" regarding Ana[illegible]
—[illegible]

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAGHU RAI

IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

COVER STORY: With the Telugu Desam and its matinée idol leader N.T. Rama Rao challenging the Congress(I) in its hitherto safest pocket borough, Andhra Pradesh, next fortnight's elections have become a battle royal. To anticipate the result, INDIA TODAY commissioned an election forecast. An analysis of the poll campaigns in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tripura. **Page 18**

CURRENT EVENTS: The dissident storm in Maharashtra turned into a maelstrom, as over 100 Congress(I) MLA's heckled Chief Minister Babasaheb Bhosale, in the legislature party office, brought a privilege motion against him and finally submitted a memorandum to the high command seeking his removal. The supremo of the dissidents, A.R. Antulay, pulled strings. An exclusive report with interviews of Bhosale and Antulay. **Page 36**

YEAR IN REVIEW: At the end of 1982, it was clear that the lows of the last 12 months outnumbered the highs. A report on the outstanding features of 1982 and what the trends portend for its successor. Plus eight pages of photographs summing up the year pictorially and, with tongue firmly in cheek, a not so serious look at a 1983 that, hopefully, will never be. **Page 70**

SPECIAL REPORT: Sivakasi, an industrial town in Tamil Nadu, houses the world's largest concentration of child labour in its various units. Out of a total population of 100,000 workers in the match and fireworks industries, the child worker population is around 45,000, mostly below the age of 14. A member of the People's Union for Civil Liberties investigated the continuing evil of child labour. A detailed report. **Page 96**

INTERVIEW OF THE FORTNIGHT: Nusrat Bhutto, chairman of the outlawed Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and wife of the executed prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto arrived in Paris seriously ill with cancer. Looking frail but decidedly determined. In her first interview to an Indian periodical since her husband's execution, she speaks about conditions in Pakistan, her years in solitary confinement and the future of the PPP. **Page 108**

SPORT: The current India-Pakistan six-Test series has predictably evoked great interest and enthusiasm in both the countries. To capture a detailed picture of the Test matches, INDIA TODAY commissioned former Indian captain Bishen Singh Bedi to report as well as lend expert views and behind-the-scenes comments. This is the first of his four reports. **Page 162**

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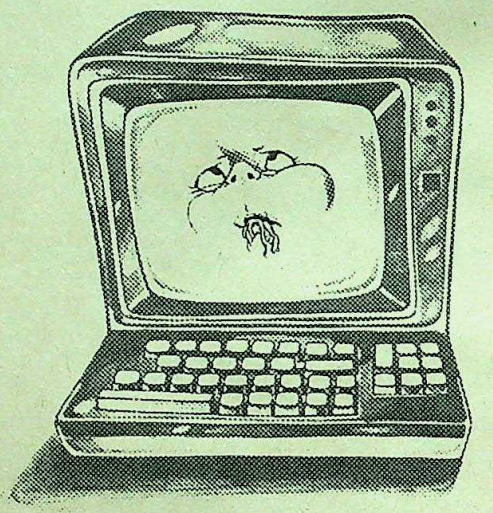

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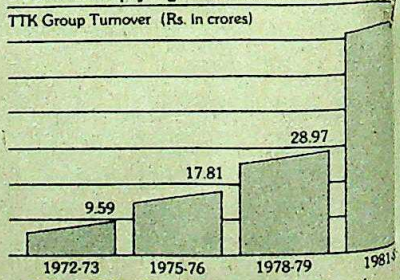

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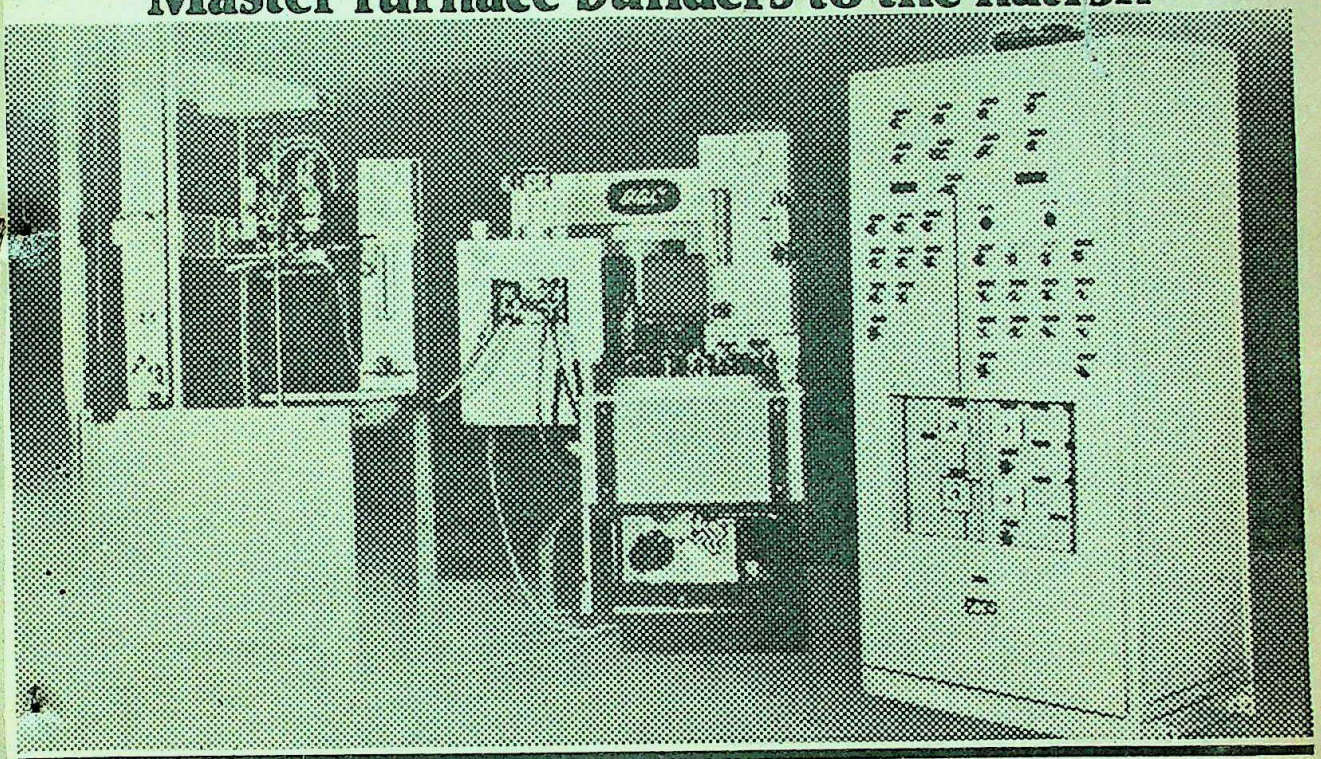

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GEC has played a pivotal part in bringing about a revolution in India's furnace technology.

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Today, more than 50% of furnaces in use are made by GEC. The latest from GEC are UHP Arc Melters with a melt down time of 60 minutes and Medcor Furnaces upto 2 tonnes.

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Heat Treatment Furnaces

Gas Carburising Furnaces • Pit Type Furnaces • Circular/Rectangular Bell Type Furnaces • Bogie Hearth Furnaces • Sealed Quench Furnaces • Cast Link Conveyor Furnaces • Slat Conveyor Furnaces • Shaker Hearth Furnaces • Mesh Belt Conveyor Furnaces • Roller Hearth Furnaces • Rotary Scroll and Rotary Retort Furnaces • Exo, Endo and Nitrogen Generators

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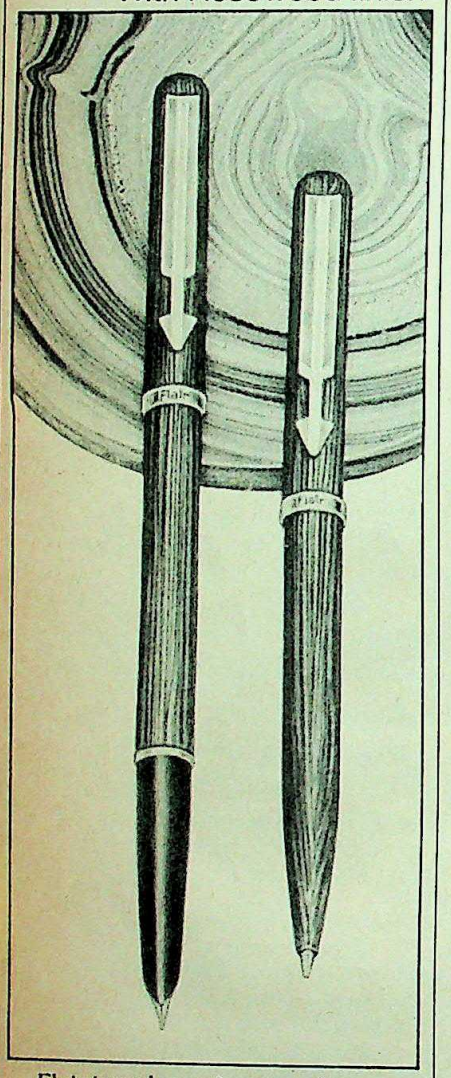

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NUCLEUS/WPC/24

➤ She (Maneka Gandhi) wanted at least a token presence in the An Pradesh elections...I have given her five seats. The poor child, her pligh touching. —*N.T. Rama Rao in a press interview in Hyder*

➤ I have not come across another man like him (Madhavsinh Solanki). man has absolutely no standards at all. —*Dr Mahipatrai Mehta in* Cu

➤ She (Mrs Gandhi) picks up her own journalists and talks to them, but has to issue contradictions. If you tell me that (she) speaks the truth...the that case the press is a liar. —*Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna in* Surya

➤ Why should I resign? I am a loyal soldier of the party. I will not resign the high command asks me to do so. I will not bow to the third party which no regards for loyalty. —*Babasaheb Bhosale in N*

➤ In the old days in India, there was at least the Right and the Left. Nowad when one reads the newspapers one gets the impression that Right is Left and is Right. —*Abu Abraham in* Debo

➤ In the manner in which the film (*Gandhi*) has been financed and aided fact stands out painfully clear: the Mahatma signally failed to liberate India from cultural imperialism. Intellectually and culturally our rulers still remain slaves to the West.
—*Rajinder Puri in* The Sunday Observer

➤ He (Zia-ul-Haq) repeated his proposal (in Washington) that India and Pakistan enter into a mutual nuclear inspection arrangement to remove all doubt that it (Pakistan) was engaged in anything "naughty".
—*Editorial comment in* The Indian Express

➤ Although politics remains the scoundrel's profession, it has become the first choice of the ambitious. There is more money and power to generate money in politics than in any other occupation.
—*Khushwant Singh in* The Hindustan Times

➤ I am an old woman now and I am not able to read without my glasses.
—*Mrs Gandhi at a public meeting in Shimoga*

This reflects the graph of rising expectations. Our living standar are going up.

➤ Both Air-India and our tourist offices concentrated on projecting the As not east of Suez, from where the participating countries came, but west of S because that is where the snob values lie. —*Amita Malik in* Express Maga

➤ The personal life of a woman and more so a public figure is discussed by press in more obscene and objectionable fashion as compared to that of a m ....The press has different values for men and women. In fact it can't stan woman with a mind.... —*Poetess Amrita Pritam in* Onlo

➤ She (Persis Khambatta) is a dumb Parsee woman.
—*Zeenat Aman in* Star & S

➤ He (the tragedy king) was getting into the marrow of my bones and distu ing my personal peace. Because that's what I started to believe, that I was born suffer and die....Psychiatrists asked me to shift over to comedy.
—*Dilip Kumar in* Filmf

➤ Amitabh (Bachchan) is known even to the illiterate people and those w people know me as his father...Harivansh Rai Bachchan, the poet, is kno among the select few—the literate. To them I am something more than Amitab father. —*Harivansh Rai Bachchan in* Weekend Rev

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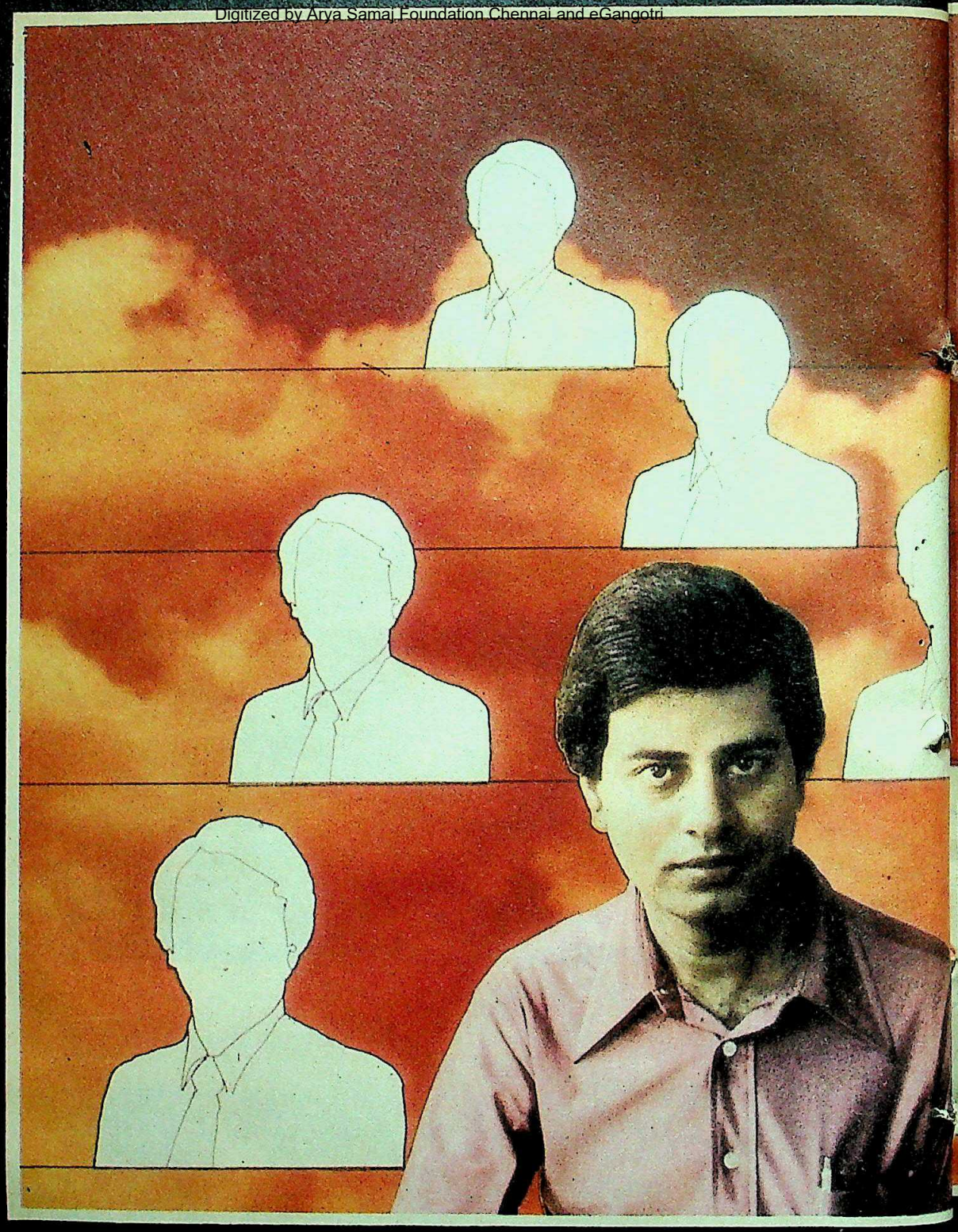

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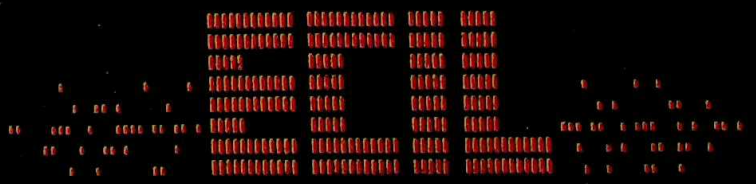

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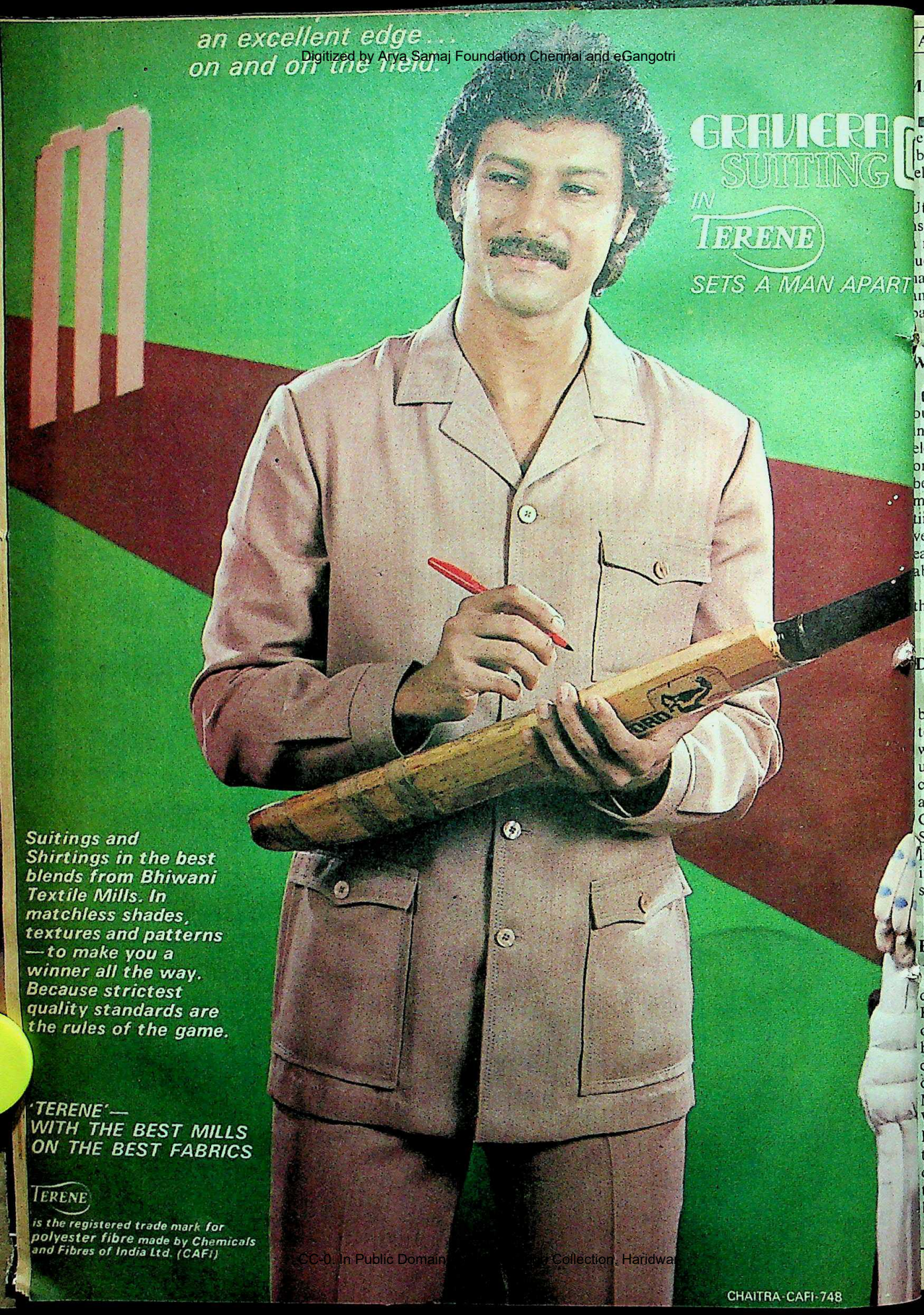

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MARRIAGE MANIA

■ For all the hue and cry being raised all over India about conversions from one religion to another, a lady and a gentleman in Rae Bareli, Uttar Pradesh, have demonstrated what some might call a refreshingly pragmatic attitude to religion. Sitaram Kori has already had three wives and three children, but probably felt that he had not achieved marital bliss, so he courted Mahadeyee, who has had two husbands and six children. All husbands and wives are living, but the two lovers disregarded this and decided to tie the knot.

As the Hindu religion forbids any diversion from the one-to-one principle, Sitaram and Mahadeyee converted to Islam. The people of their village, Ashrafpur Mawaiya, had been watching the way the

two had taken and discarded husbands and wives and this latest bright idea came as too much of a shock. Using sticks and stones and brooms, the villagers drove Sitaram and Mahadeyee out into the cold. Both are now working at a brick kiln and have applied to a court for permission to marry. And yes, they have gone back to Hinduism—as Islam didn't work out for them.

WHITE ELEPHANTS

■ Stories continue to filter out of Asiad '82. The most interesting is about 33 wooden elephants that were reportedly ordered by the organisers to be presented to the chef de missions of all the contingents. Magnificently carved out of sheesham wood, each weighed 30 kg and cost about Rs 5,000

However, presenting them proved quite a problem.

The best occasion was the lunch hosted by the mayor of the Asian Games Village: unfortunately, only six chef de missions turned up for that lunch so the elephants were sidelined. Next, there was the lunch hosted at Badhkal Lake by Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, but only four chef de missions attended.

Upon which, with time rapidly running out, the authorities decided to quietly slip the statues into the rooms of the chef de missions. When the occupants returned at the end of the day, they discovered a beautifully carved elephant and a massive excess baggage problem: 30 kg of solid wood cannot be just put into the pocket and carried on board an aircraft. So the grateful recipients asked their respective embassies to ask the Indian External Affairs Ministry to allow Appu free on board as a gift from one country to another.

DEAD ON

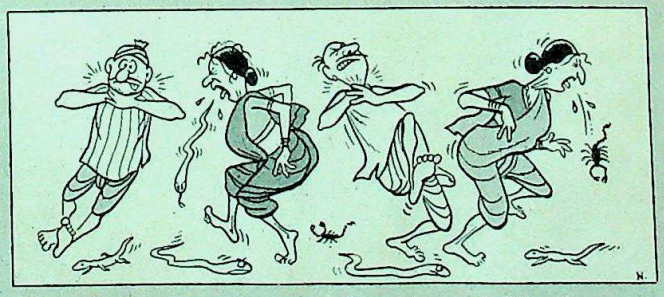
■ Death comes as the end, but when? Ye who turn and toss in your beds wondering when the grim reaper will turn up with his scythe, look to the curious tale of Vellaygounder, a 54-year-old coolie of Gounder, about 7 km from Salem. Possibly nothing in his life became him like the leaving it. In the great tradition of saints, Vellaygounder predicted the time of his death with eerie precision.

He was found dead in his house last fortnight. After all the rites had been completed his kin were about to set fire to his pyre when, to everybody's surprise, Vellaygounder got up, brushed the dust from his body and proclaimed: "I am alive now but will die on the seventh day. Bury me near my wife's grave." That said, he walked away home.

And on the seventh day after his resurrection, Vellaygounder told his relatives that he would die soon and asked them to take him to his wife's grave at Kasakkal, 3 km away. They did so, being followed by a huge crowd which had come to see Vellaygounder carry out his promise. He arrived at the spot, contemplated some distant idea for a few moments, sat down—and died.

EXORCIST III

■ Going by reports, it is quite possible that Damien Karras, who once scared the devil out of a young girl, may have to pack his bags and come to Malshelu in Akola district in Maharashtra. Malshelu is not as grand as Washington, of course, but Karras might find more material there: in a letter to the district collector of Akola, all the 1,200 residents of Malshelu have complained



that they are the victims of black magic.

The letter says that at odd hours of the day some of the villagers feel that they are being "strangled" whereupon they grunt and choke and wheeze in fear. Others have the rather unusual experience of vomitting snakes and scorpions, which does not say much for Malshelu's food.

But the most terrifying experience was of some of the houses mysteriously catching fire between 12 and 3 in the afternoon. This, more than the Malshelu Strangler and the assorted snakes and other vermin that are regularly regurgitated, has, so says the letter, frightened the villagers out of their wits. Hence their frantic appeal for help. O Karras of the dog collar, where are you?

Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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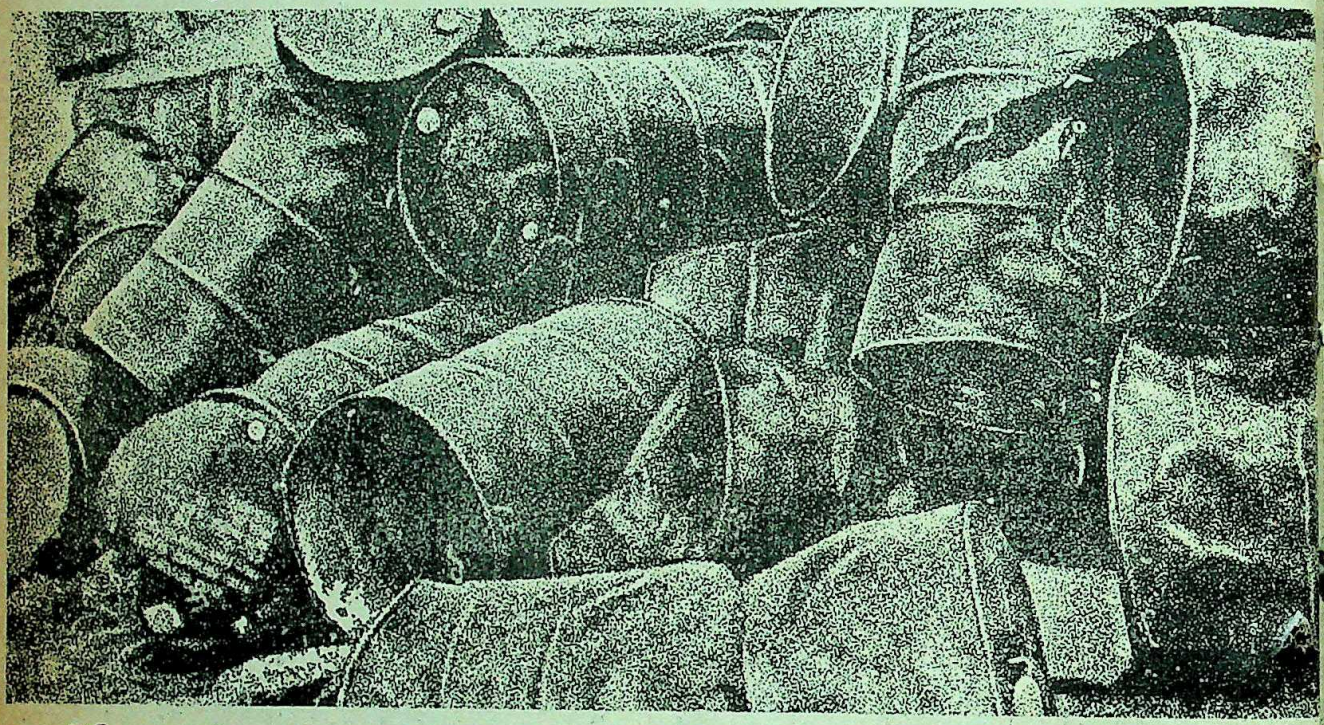
July 1980.

A small oversight in storing, and oil worth Rs. 71 lakhs goes down the drain. If only...



If only prevention had been a priority.

Improper storage of oil drums resulted in a major loss of Rs.71 lakhs. Suitable stacking with adequate strapping or lashing would have prevented the loss.

Goods worth Rs.3,500 crores are lost every year in India due to poor packaging, mishandling, improper storage and careless transportation. Besides, there can be indirect loss — failure of contractual responsibility, loss of reputation and market and sometimes even loss of business. And 70% of that loss is preventable.

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Vibration: Ensure proper support and separation within the package and fasten securely.

Compression: Choose rigid packing material. Stack lighter packages on top of heavier ones.

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Pilferage: Unitise or containerise your products. Use coded markings instead of descriptive labelling.

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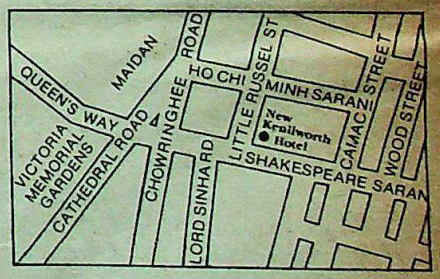

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ANDHRA PRADESH ELECTION FORECAST

Towards A Bruised Win

WHEN N.T. RAMA RAO's Telugu Desam stakes a claim in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections on January 5, it will pose the most serious threat to the Congress which has ruled the state uninterruptedly since Independence. To forecast the result, INDIA TODAY *commissioned Ashok Lahiri and Prannoy Roy of the Delhi School of Economics to prepare a forecast of the result based on a technique first used successfully for the 1980 Lok Sabha poll (*INDIA TODAY, *January 1-15, 1980).*

*Lahiri and Roy compiled a data bank on the previous four assembly elections in the state and used an ICL 2960 computer to identify 10 "homogeneous swing zones". The forecasting programme picked three constituencies from each swing zone and two villages in each constituency. The Indian Market Research Bureau (*IMRB*) was commissioned to conduct about 2,300 interviews in the chosen villages.*

All electors were asked just one question: If an election were to take place tomorrow, who would you vote for? *The electors were shown a card on which were listed the candidates of the constituency with the party symbol alongside. The card was in English and Telugu and indicated that the respondent could answer against any name or party, even if it was not listed on the card. The result was then processed through the computer.*

Owing to the magnitude of the task, the poll was conducted some three weeks before polling date, at the start of the campaign. The results, therefore, cannot account for large swings of opinion that may arise from the success or failure of the campaign effort of the main parties or personalities, particularly Mrs Gandhi and Rama Rao.

This forecast is part of a research programme supported by ICIM, *(International Computers Indian Manufacture Limited).*

THE CONGRESS(I) is set for a return to power with an absolute, though greatly reduced, majority with an estimated 156 seats in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly. Its chief rival the Telugu Desam will, in its first ever election just nine months after the party's formation, come in with a very creditable 102 seats. The forecast shows that the Congress(I) will get a higher percentage of votes than in the 1978 elections, indicating

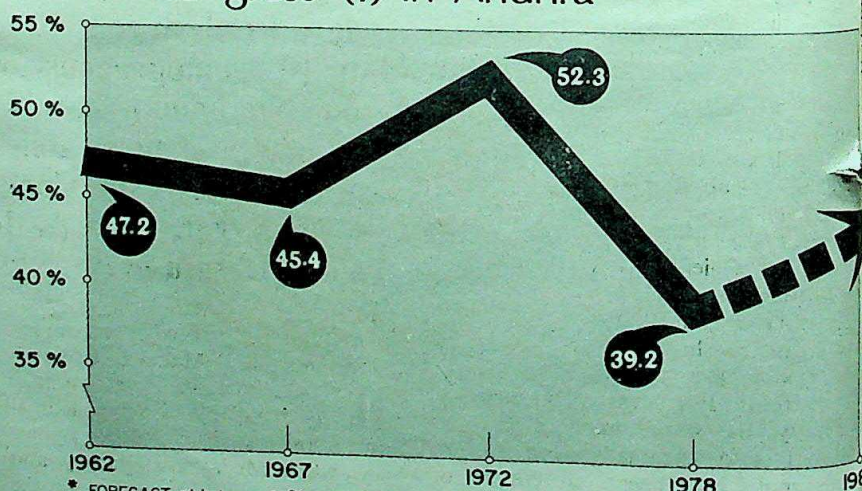
Party Position in Andhra Assembly Elections

	1983*	1978	1972	1967	196
CONGRESS (I)	156*	175	219	165	17
NEXT LARGEST PARTY	102* TELUGU DESAM	60 JANATA	7 CPI	29 SWATANTRA	51 CPI
TOTAL SEATS	294	294	287	287	300
PERCENTAGE OF CONG. (I) SEATS	53.1*	59.5	76.3	57.5	59.

* FORECAST: 156 is the midpoint forecast. The Congress (I) strength could range from a low of 137 to a high of 196 with the oppositions' share adjustable accordingly

Congress(I) will win more votes than in 1978 but will end up with fewer seats in the assembly because the opposition vote is more or less polarised around the Telugu Desam Party.

Percentage of votes for Congress (I) in Andhra



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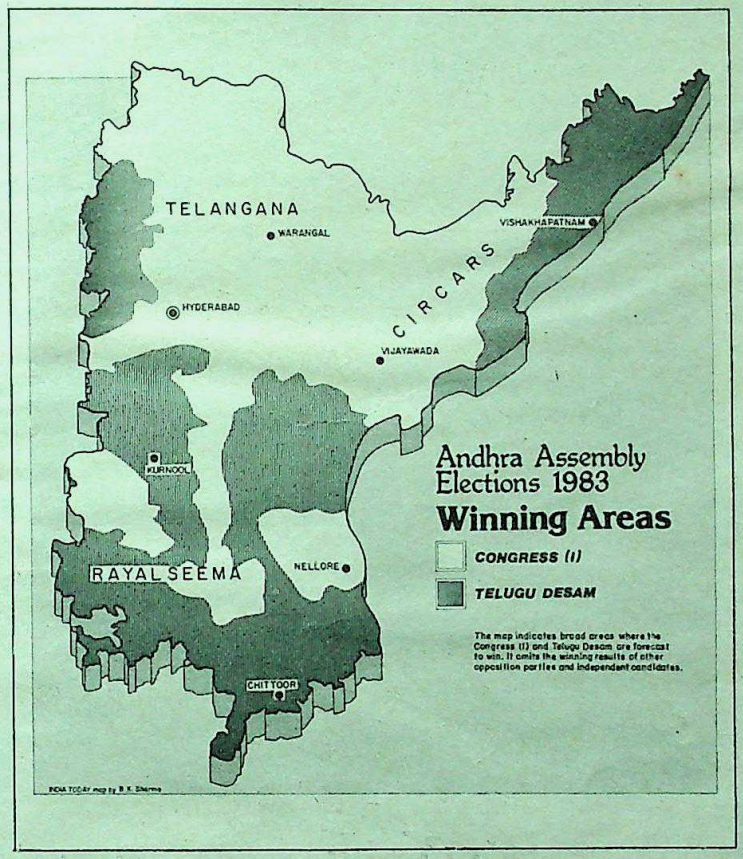
omparative swing in its ur since the last assembly ; but the number of seats ins will decline from the it won last time.

The reason for this para- is simple. This year the osition vote is more or less rised around the Telugu am and its charismatic er N.T. Rama Rao, with result that there are, for practical purposes, just two tive parties in the fray: Congress(I), and Telugu am. In 1978 there were e: the Congress(I), the of- l Congress and the Janata. Congress and the Janata veen them won more votes the Congress(I), but all could succeed in doing to split the opposition thus allowing the ruling y to romp home comfor- y. The forecast for 1983 ws that the ruling party s a greater threat to its on the Assembly this than in 1978 because of sudden emergence of the gu Desam.

Trends: Though there are ast number of candidates n the opposition parties, forecast suggests that bar- the Telugu Desam, no er party is likely to make a ous impact at the polls. reover, these elections fea- a number of straight tests between the two or parties with no third intervention—a situa- somewhat like that in when the Congress(I) its largest number of s.

The forecast also yields resting sidelights: N.T. na Rao will win both his titiencies, Tirupati and liwada, but his win in the nd will not be as impressi- s in the first. Chief Mini- Vijayabhaskara Reddy, peting from Yemmiganur urnool district, should win this con- ency, having lost it in the 1978 mbly elections. Interestingly, Neelam va Reddy, the state's first Harijan minister who eventually rose to me the republic's president and retired ugust last year and D. Sanjivaiah, the 's first chief minister, lost at the hustings from Yemmiganur when he sought re-election in 1962. Maneka Gandhi's Sanjay Vichar Manch seems set to make its legislative debut by winning Kamareddy in Nizamabad district which is part of Mrs Gandhi's Medak constituency, and one of the five seats it is contesting on the coat-tails of the Telugu Desam.

N.T. Rama Rao will win both his constituencies, more easily in Tirupati than Gudiwada. Chief Minister Vijayabhaskara Reddy should also win his constituency, and the Sanjay Vichar Manch seems set to make its legislative debut, with one victory forecast.



Andhra Pradesh can be divided into 10 'homogeneous swing zones' where public opinion moves in the same direction. Six of these zones are forecast to swing towards the Congress(I) and four against it, towards the Telugu Desam party.

More important, however, is the indication that the 1983 election will see the ruling party's hold on the assembly reduced to its weakest ever. The reason for its bruised victory is, of course, the pattern of opposition vote-splitting, reflected in the way in which split votes get converted into fewer seats. Obviously, the more divided the opposition the greater the fragmentation of the anti-Congress(I) vote; and a relatively smaller vote in favour of the ruling party will give it more seats. In 1978, the ruling party polled only 39.2 per cent of the votes but won 175 seats, in comparison with 45.4 per cent of the votes and 165 seats in 1967, because the opposition was effectively more divided in 1978 than in 1967. As opposition parties have multiplied, the number of seats the ruling party won for every 10 per cent of the votes polled rose from 35 in 1967 to 38 in 1972 and to a high of 44 in 1978.

Swing Zones: Because of the Telugu Desam, in 1983 this trend will be reversed. The swing of votes towards the Congress(I) will vary in the different parts of the state. Andhra Pradesh breaks up into 10 homogeneous swing zones—regions in which, on the basis of past elections, public opinion generally moves in the same direction and with similar intensity. Six of these zones are forecast to swing towards the Congress(I) in comparison with 1978. The other four zones show a clear swing away from the Congress(I), where it will work to the advantage of the Telugu Desam.

The challenger party can expect to pick up seats largely from the southern part of the Rayalseema region. It will also mop up the north-eastern parts of the state in the coastal region. In the Telangana region of the state, the Telugu Desam can carve out an area to the west of Hyderabad city. The rest of the state should remain safely in Congress (I) hands, with pockets in the countryside and the cities going to the other opposition parties.

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ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

A Battle Royal

AT ELECTION time she admits to no peers. She never does anything in half measure. Her energy and dedication recognise no bounds. She travels from morning to night, by car and helicopter, reaching out to as many of her country's teeming voters as is humanly possible. She relies on the magic of her presence, swaying crowds in spite of a timorous, highly-pitched voice which is always heard but seldom listened to. A past master at the art of handling mass audiences, she draws inspiration as she campaigns, paradoxically gaining strength and stamina as the hours and days wear on.

Last fortnight, as the campaigns for assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tripura moved into their final laps, the indefatigable Mrs Indira Gandhi was once again at the hustings. Her campaigns this time round were keener, propelled by an edge of uncertainty, of awareness that in a battle with high stakes nothing could be taken for granted any more. Her effort was more Herculean, her reach sought to be larger than ever before. For a full 16 days, starting on December 15 even before the last date of withdrawals of candidature, Mrs Gandhi was on the move, criss-crossing the three states with meticulous care, dropping in—literally at times in Mi-8 helicopters—on some 400 constituencies, speaking at an even larger number of public meetings.

It was an unprecedented task mid-term poll, not just for Mrs but the entire galaxy of the ruling luminaries. Member of Parliament fective second in command, Rajiv G matched his mother's bone-shatterin erary, stomping through some 36 stituencies in Andhra Pradesh Karnataka in 19 days with just a break for Christmas. Both southern sent their ministers out into the stituencies weeks ahead under the g reviewing the 20-point programme, reality canvassing preliminary view information on the election. And Delhi descended an unbelievable gr some 25 of ministerial rank, to be jo the campaign trail by 6 chief mi

N.T. Rama Rao campaigning in Anantapur district: blockbuster appeal

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAGHU RAI

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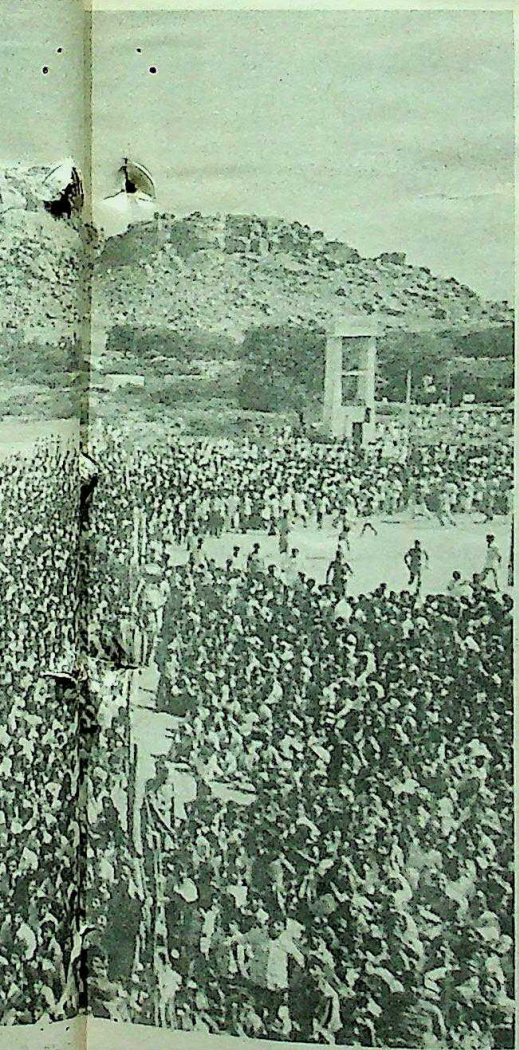
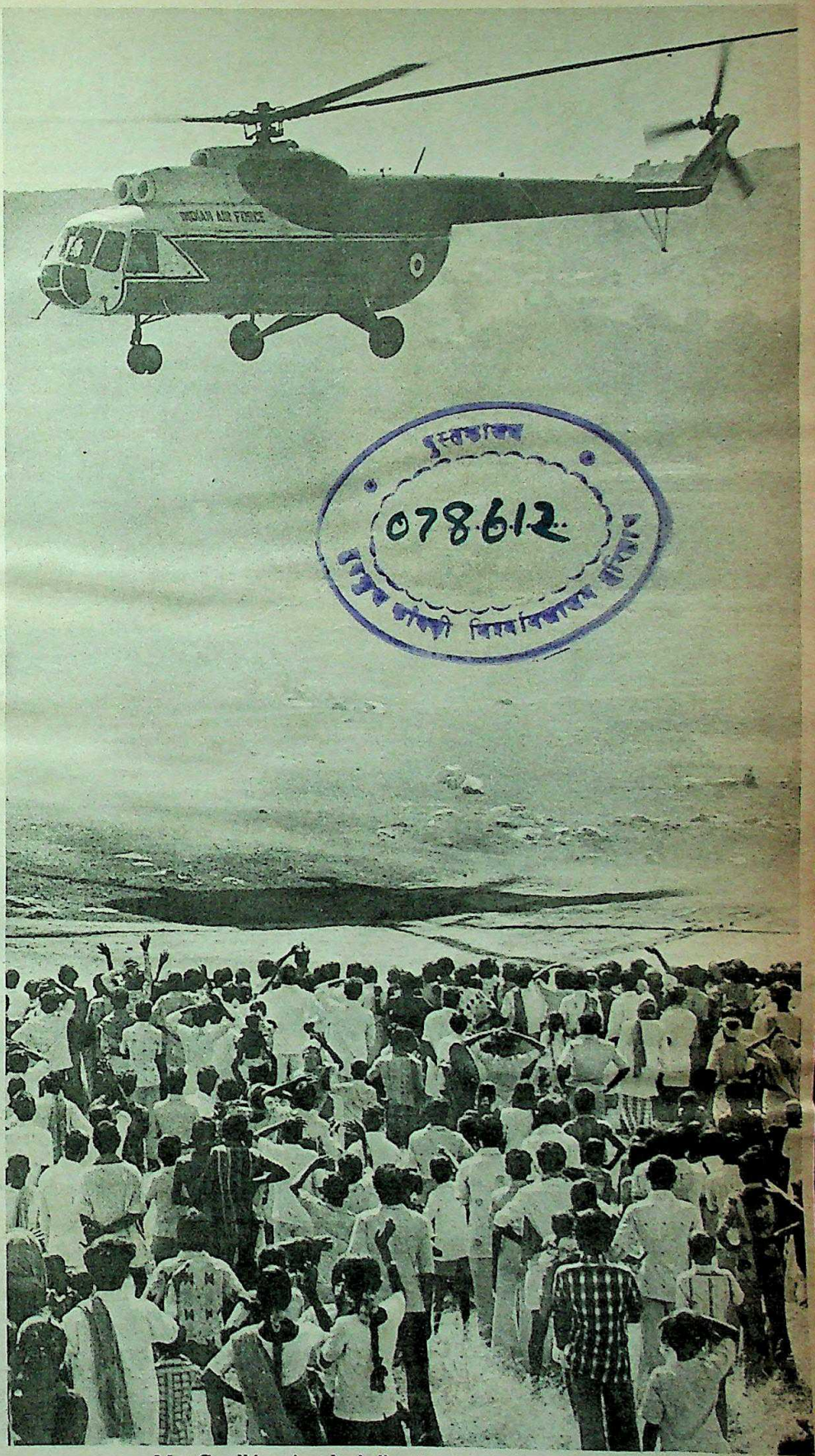
hen cabinet helpers.

Determined Campaign: This effort, if
hing else, showed the utter seriousness
purpose that had come to mark the
ngress(I) high command. With a string
recent electoral successes in by-elections
ping turn the party's relatively bleak
formance in the summer poll in
ryana and Himachal Pradesh, the
ngress(I) was taking no chances. And it
s easy to see why. When the party lost
1977 Lok Sabha elections to the Janata
ty there was some consolation for, as a
emarked: "If Indira is no more
lia," an image harking back to former
ngress president D.K. Barooah's
amous remark during the Emergency,
e is at least south India."

Karnataka's Chikmagalur consti-
ncy is where Mrs Gandhi first rode her
ne-back trail. Andhra Pradesh's Medak
nstituency was where she found her pre-
t political home. Between them, the
o states have stood by her through





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इन्दिरा गांधी विश्वविद्यालय

Mrs Gandhi arrives by helicopter: an unprecedented effort

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thick and thin even when her fortunes sank in most of the country. In 1978, at the nadir of her political career, Mrs Gandhi's Congress(I) won almost 40 per cent of the Andhra vote gaining 175 seats in the 294-seat Assembly. Defections added another 78 to give her party 253 seats when the elections were ordered in November last. In Karnataka she took 152 seats with 43 per cent of the vote in 1978 in a house of 224 seats. Her hold on the state was even more dramatically demonstrated in the 1980 Lok Sabha elections when she swept the floor with the Opposition winning 41 of Andhra's 42 seats and 27 of Karnataka's 28.

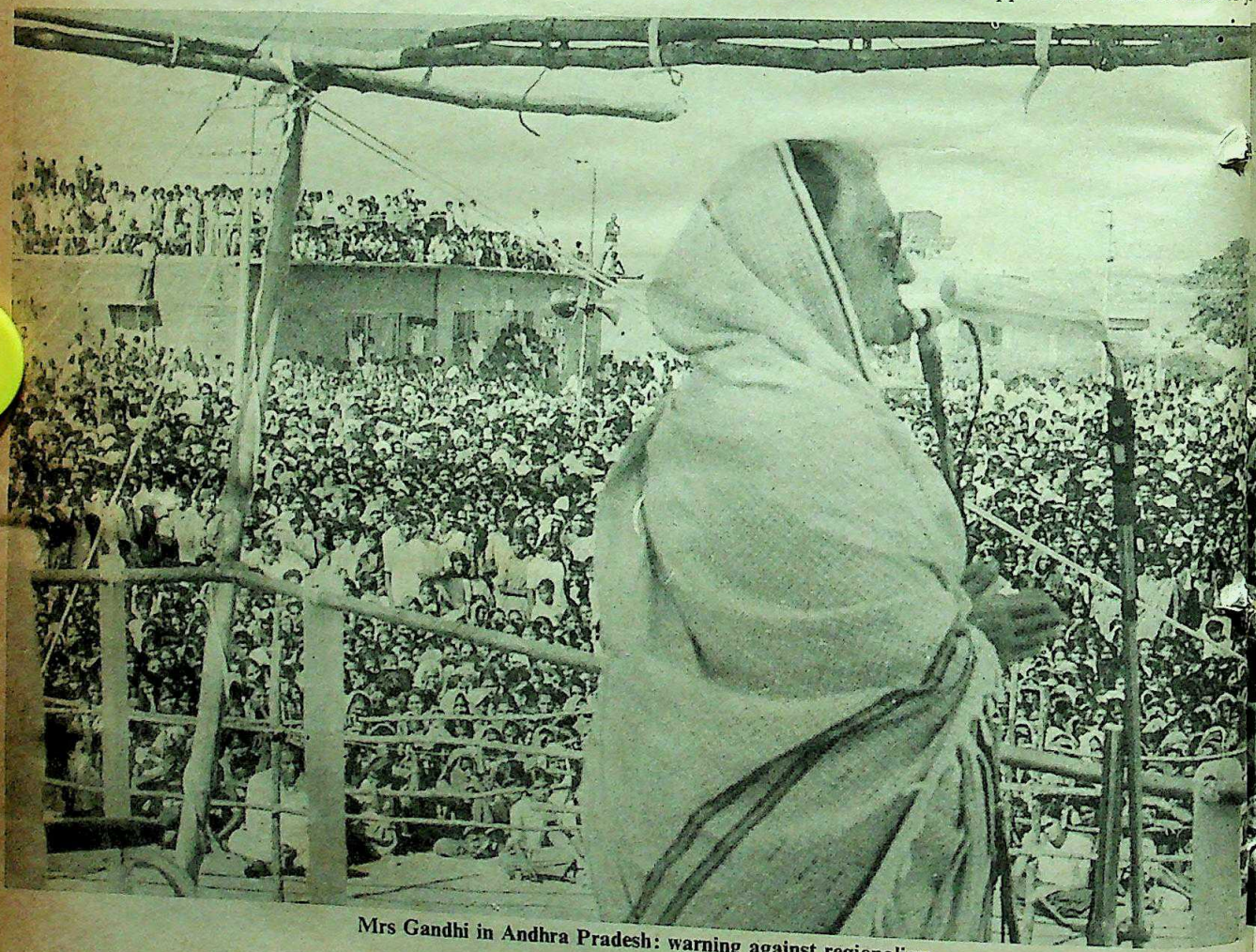
It is not that the charisma of Mrs Gandhi has in any way diminished. Neither age nor custom stales her infinite capacity to attract, hold and eventually influence millions of trusting, ever hopeful people, persuading them to vote for the Hand which will feed them. The "Ma-Baap" Government she came to symbolise faced no serious challengers in the past, and there were no other options. Election time was, moreover, carnival time to witness flying machines bearing a beaming "Indiramma" with folded hands and a pleading voice to seek their votes. How could anyone have the heart to say no to one who had taken the trouble to visit them all the way from far-away Delhi when their individual representatives, once safely ensconced in Bangalore or Hyderabad, couldn't find time to ...otional, ... their five-year term?

Vijayabhaskara Reddy: little known

Serious Challenge: The ... r the rul... hasn't changed much in Karnataka. ...k-bottom... Andhra Pradesh, an ageing film star ...manner... Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NT ...ty have ... torn a leaf out of Mrs Gandhi's own ...ucing the ... and is threatening to check the gran ...ntre's sa... ter herself. And he is moving ac ...ng out at ... board which is chequered with disc ...enna Re... and a certain ennui, a staleness of ...en he wa... which has come to nibble at Telugu ...ight com... making the state ripe for an assault ...nmarily ... on regional appeal. ...nkatram, ...mma, th...

The Telugu people are high ...the state ...otional. The only other occasion ...n-starter, ... they were confronted with an em ...ayabhask... appeal was in the Telangana sep ...nalled th... movement a decade ago. In the 197 ...the state ... Sabha election, the Telangana ... Mrs Ga... Samithi—which spearheaded the ...ngress. I... ment to create a separate state fr ...n curryin... state's northern Telangana region (a ...r who lo... posed to the coastal and so ... **Loyal S...** Rayalseema regions)—got a respectab ... not en... seats of the 14 in that region. ...ddy took ...

The appeal this time round is ...yderabad ...



Mrs Gandhi in Andhra Pradesh: warning against regionalism

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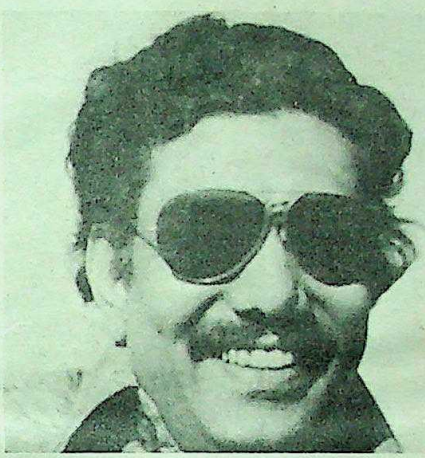
time to otional, and it falls on fertile ground. r the ruling party's image has touched The k-bottom in the state, thanks largely to rnataka. manner in which the affairs of the film star ty have been manipulated from Delhi, Rao (NT ucing the state's chief ministers to the dhi's own tre's satraps, to be anointed and the gran g out at will. T. Anjiah, who replaced oving ac enna Reddy, was taken by surprise with disc en he was made chief minister, and was eness of ight completely unawares when he was t Telugu nmarily replaced by Bhavanam n assault nkatram, a Reddy married to a mma, the two dominant communities re high the state. Venkatram proved to be a occasion -starter, and his replacement by K. an emo ayabhaskara Reddy four months ago gana sep nalled the possibility of early elections the 197 the state. Said NTR: "What is headed angana Mrs Gandhi is neither a party nor a ed the ngress. It is an assembly of unthinking state fo n currying favours with the prime min- region (er who lords it over the Telugu people." and so **Loyal Supporters:** But the interference respecta not end there. When Vijayabhaskara n. ddy took over the reins of power in ound is yderabad in September it was felt that he would be treated with the dignity due to a chief minister. But he was obliged to take M. Baga Reddy, embroiled in a cement scandal (INDIA TODAY, September 30, 1982), into his cabinet because he happened to be the custodian for Mrs Gandhi's Medak constituency. Similarly, on the choice of the state party president, the new chief minister wanted a man he could get on with. G. Venkataswamy, who was kept out of the new ministry because of his alleged involvement in an urban land grab, was inflicted on the new administration as party chief. Faced with the party high command's continuing intervention, Vijayabhaskara Reddy even toyed with the idea of stepping down, but was persuaded to carry on till the elections—which explains why he has not yet given up his Lok Sabha seat.



Gundu Rao: riding high

But the men in the street do not speak in details such as these or in terms of issues. They consider their options in much more basic terms, in down to earth language. Mrs Gandhi has no dearth of people who, like S. Yadiah, a farm worker in Wanaparthy said: "We eat the salt of Indiramma, we will give her our vote." Or like a bus mechanic, B.D. Shetty who proclaimed: "Indiramma is the saviour." Yet there is a chorus of another kind represented by Guntur farmer Venkateswara Rao who said angrily: "What has the Congress done in 35 years for the rural people except making false election promises?" Or paddy grower Dasari Seetha-

Rajiv Gandhi in a rural constituency: lending a hand

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N.T. RAMA RAO

A One-Man Show

NO FILM star could have hoped for a better script. A sprawling set as vast as a state with complete freedom to wander at will. Legions of adoring fans converted at the mere wave of a hand into a seemingly limitless supporting cast. An audience of millions, restless after years of stale politics and staler politicians, responding readily to an emotional promise of change.

If the whirlwind campaign of Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), at 60 the unquestioned idol of the Telugu screen, has more than a touch of the theatrical, it is only because there is something powerfully dramatic about the way he is going about his quest for political power. Ranging himself across from the galaxy of the Congress(I)'s star campaigners, who with their helicopters and fleets of cars are sparing no effort, NTR confesses to being a one-man show—and while on the move a fairly modest one at that. From before dawn till late into the night he rides a 40-year-old Chevrolet owned by his Rama Krishan Cine Studios, refitted last August at a cost of Rs 10,000 to serve as a self-sufficient campaign trailer. The coach is preceded, as often as not, only by another coach-load of policemen. Now and then he is joined by other vehicles bearing local candidates, and organisers from his nascent Telugu Desam party, or simply enthusiastic supporters.

"I have had no sleep, no food for the last three days," he said one afternoon last fortnight at the start of his campaign, his voice hoarse from addressing dozens of meetings, big and small, and riding 400 km each day. Inside the van he sits on an aircraft-style seat, drinking soda and mopping his brow to wipe the sweat and grime of the meeting he has just left, mentally composing himself for the next one. The van is loaded with boxes containing cassettes of his speeches which are distributed to party workers, and copies of his party's manifesto.

Frugally Equipped: Under the bed built to one side are stacked crates of soda-water. Garlands collected from meetings are strewn on the floor. There is an ice-box, and a picnic hamper with fruit. Dressed in khaki bush shirt and slacks, his feet in dusty sneakers, NTR is alerted to an approaching crowd of people by a buzzer sounded by the van driver. A dab of cologne, a quick glance in the mirror above the van's wash basin, and the portly screen portrayer of gods and goodness climbs an aluminium step ladder, through an open hatch, onto the roof of the coach.

The effect is electric. From nowhere the crowds begin to pour on to the roads. Faces, of men, women and children of all ages, light up as recognition dawns. The coach keeps moving to the venue of the public meeting, and soon it is surrounded by a flowing river of people, running along pell-mell, stretching far behind and ahead of the coach. Normally falling hours behind his published schedule, NTR has often kept people waiting for hours, sometimes through the night, coming in the morning to meetings scheduled the evening before. But there is little impatience, and none remains as his van heaves into view.

At small towns, waiting crowds hail passing cars and buses, asking for his whereabouts. Jeeps travelling ahead use loudspeakers to forewarn townsfolk of his imminent arrival. His campaign symbol, the bicycle—"Because it is the common man's vehicle and we sta for the common man," he explains— the most visible of all political sig Shopkeepers hoist their own bicyc on top of their shacks. Elsewhere, party's yellow flags with the symb painted on in red flutter atop po competing for attention with Congress(I)'s tricolour and spinn wheel, lit up at night.

Practised Performance: In d cussion NTR plays down his cine image as a factor in his campai "Where is the image," he asks in bro snatches of conversation in betw meetings, "I am completely black (w sunburn), there is no glamour, dress I'm wearing is ordinary. No, it the faith of the people." But the doesn't tell the whole story. Years film acting have left an indelible m on the man. In gesture or body nguage, NTR is an accomplished pe former. Whether it is the flick of hand or a turn of his shoulders to em phasise a point, the practised skill evident. And his campaigners use larg cut-outs of NTR as Lord Krishna hea ped with garlands at important vantag points. It is a role he has often playe and the identification is complete.

"That is why the people put their hopes on me," he says by way of expla nation. "I've portrayed lots of divin characters, so they believe I will d

NTR in his campaign trailer: practised performer

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I promise, that if NTR comes to
r there won't be corruption."
NTR offers no palliatives, no so-
ns. But his message is direct, and
d at the Telugu heart. He speaks
e persistence of poverty in spite of
ty four decades of independence, of
gu honour which is trampled upon
use Delhi appoints and topples
ministers at will, of the Telugu
uage and its neglect, of the need to
property rights to women, of in-
n, costs, fees which deny poor
le education and medical help.
the delight of his inflamed audi-
he ridicules MLA's who "are ha-
if they get a vehicle with a flag, a
e, a bungalow and are not bo-
d about anything else. Do MLA's
come back and ask you if they can
your problems? They take votes
go and sit in MLA quarters in air-
itioned rooms, drink and play ca-
Is this why you sent them there?"
is hampered by the lack of an
oisation, but relies completely on a
ng personal charisma.

Powerful Rapport: The tension he
ds with his impassioned oratory
s his crowds cheering and rapt.
dside meetings scheduled to last a
moments extend into minutes. A
dule 15-minute speech is pro-
ed to 45. And his arrivals and de-
ures are chaotic. "I did not come
for power," he says in his parting
ds, "I did not come here for mo-
I did not come here for status and
tige. I enjoyed all this and more. I
e here as a *sanyasi* to follow you. I
e earned money. I have earned sta-
And all because you gave it to me.
nt to do something in return and
you. Vote for the Telugu Desam
didate. I hope he will not disappoint
but if he does we will throw him
with all dishonour."

And as the cavalcade moves on,
e is again bedlam. The river of peo-
again begins its unsteady flow.
ers and garlands cascade on to the
h. A young woman's face breaks
a disbelieving, shy smile as he fl-
a garland in her direction. Slowly
crowds ebb, and the young men
ning along with the van fall behind.
catcalls and whistles grow softer,
NTR returns to the cavernous van
is his home for three weeks. Will
emotion translate into votes?
y not? You saw how they feel for
he says impassively. That remains
e seen but it is a question being
d anxiously all over the state.

—SUMAN DUBEY

ramajuly of Peruvallipalam: "We elders are interested in those who are capable of developing the area, but youngsters are lured to Telugu Desam by the film dialogue-like speeches of N.T. Rama Rao."

There is some truth in all these utterances, and the contrary voices are loud enough to give the Congress(I) sleepless nights. As long as the state remained Mrs Gandhi's pocket borough, unchallenged by any potent force, there was no need to heed those who spoke out against the party. Now, out of the blue, has come Telugu Desam a party not even a year old which has the audacity to challenge the Congress(I) in 287 constituencies and lend its might, flag and symbol to one who is anathema to the ruling party: Maneka Gandhi and her equally fledgeling Sanjay Vichar Manch in five constituencies.

Star Appeal: The Congress(I) has played into Telugu Desam hands by releasing its manifesto for the state in Delhi rather than in Hyderabad, lending credibility to NTR's charge of the diminution of the state authority. In contrast, NTR has called for devolution of power as required in the Constitution. "It is a fundamental of democracy that the chief minister should be elected from among MLA's and that the Centre should not interfere. That's in the Constitution," he says. NTR wants the Centre to confine itself to defence, foreign affairs, railways and currency, leaving the rest of the responsibility to the state.

As long as the state remained Mrs Gandhi's pocket borough, unchallenged by any potent force, there was no need to heed those who spoke out against the party. Now, out of the blue, has come Telugu Desam . . .

But it isn't the intellectual content of his programme that drives some of the largest campaign audiences ever seen in state to his meetings. To many he is "an *avatar* (incarnation) born to restore dharma" during a chaotic period of history. To millions of Telugus, NTR is the Kalki *avatar*, the last *avatar* to emerge before utter chaos overtakes the earth as written in Hindu scriptures. Imitating the campaign style of another film star-turned-politician, M.G. Ramachandran in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, NTR has succeeded in creating a shock wave in the coastal regions and Rayalseema which is battering at the ramparts of the Congress(I) citadel.

His charisma (*see box page 24*) is explosive. And it is based on a set of three ingredients that cannot but win him mass appeal. With the skill of a director he has combined the appeal of religion—the divine roles he plays in most films—and his unchallenged appeal as the state's top film star, with the promise of using political power for the good of his people.

To help him, NTR has put together a team of candidates who he believes have a better background than most Congressmen, the fact that he has 50 ex-Congressmen in his ranks notwithstanding. "We have chosen those people as our candidates who command respect in their areas. And ours is a team which is not only young but educated as well," says Satyanarayana Rao, Telugu Desam's ideologue. Rao says of his party's 287 candidates, 28 are post-graduates and 125 graduates, including 20 doctors, 47 lawyers and eight engineers. To combat the Congress(I)'s appeal to Harijans, NTR's party has put up 40 Harijan candidates. Telugu Desam candidates report an average age of 41 against the Congress(I)'s 50.

Obviously, the Congress(I) is worried. The change of chief ministers and the advancing of the poll date by several months were sure indication that the high command wanted to give NTR no more breathing space than it could help. But NTR was quick off the mark, and had his first taste of victory even before the elections were notified. Two of his promises made to the people of the state—to supply rice at Rs 2 a kilo and give free midday meals to primary school children, have already been implemented by the Vijayabhaskara Reddy Government.

Careful Organisation: Apart from such efforts to pull the rug from under NTR's feet, the ruling party has spared nothing on the campaign trail. The All-India Congress Committee(I) has constituted a Central Election Committee with Industry Minister N.D. Tiwari at its head and External Affairs Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, Energy Minister P. Shivshankar, Minister of State for Transport Sita Ram Kesari, Chief Minister Vijayabhaskara Reddy and Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (APCC-I) chief G. Venkataswamy as members operating out of the picturesque Lake View state government guest-house next to Raj Bhavan in Hyderabad. To keep what

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he calls a "direct link with the grass roots workers," Tiwari has assigned each parliamentary, constituency to the local MP who is assisted either by another MP or an MLA from outside the state. These MP's and MLA's are obliged to hold daily meeting of their candidates and sort out problems. Says Tiwari: "I get minute-to-minute reports from each constituency. We are leaving nothing to chance. Any worker anywhere in Andhra Pradesh can just pick up the phone and talk to me directly about any problem he faces in his area."

In addition, a strong clutch of aides—a large number of them MLA's from Uttar Pradesh—were provided to work in various constituencies. While the legwork was done by locals, there was some chagrin that decisions about funds and publicity materials were left to outside observers since the election was being master-minded in Delhi.

Undoubtedly, however, it isn't the impressive organisation that will get the Congress(I) the victory it seeks. For that, the party's trump card is, and remains Mrs Gandhi. As she ended the first phase of her campaign on Christmas eve, Mrs Gandhi had toured more than 4,430 km through the state and was scheduled to repeat that in the second phase after Christmas, touching at least 200 constituencies. In an effort to reach more and more audiences, Mrs Gandhi, cut off from the crowd by elaborate police supervised *bandobast*, spoke briefly, 10 or 15 minutes at a time, her words rendered into Telugu by Narasimha Rao. Her favourite theme: the danger of regional parties. As the campaign wore on, she directed her attacks more specifically at the Telugu Desam, trying to exploit its lack of organisational moorings

Buta Singh (left) and Mukherjee

and blatantly partisan appeal. Other than this, she concentrated on well-worn themes, selling hers as the only national party which could deliver.

But her meetings lacked high voltage. She could still raise cheers by uttering *Cheti gurtuke mee votu*—vote for the hand—but her meetings have been better attended in the past. Said Y. Venkata Rao, former agriculture minister and

Kesari (left) and Tiwari

Congress(I) candidate from Vemur: "Though it was a bad year for crops, threshing is continuing. The campaign will pick up only in the last few days."

Discontented Voters: Voter apathy was, however, only one of the problems facing the ruling party. Many people were discontented with the functioning of the party. Among the discontented voters are the Muslims, who after years of being Congress(I) supporters, are having second thoughts about blindly voting for Mrs Gandhi. Their major grouse stems from the surprisingly low representation they have in the public and political life of the state, despite the fact that every seventh person in Andhra Pradesh is a Muslim. For example, only two of the 32-member council of ministers are Muslims and only one of the 41 Lok Sabha members from Andhra Pradesh is a Muslim. There is not even one panchayat samiti or zilla parishad chairman drawn from the Muslim community, and there is no Muslim judge in the Andhra Pradesh High Court. Even among the 47 top brass of the police, only one is a Muslim. All this has led to disillusionment among the community, which has been turning to parties such as the Majlis Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen and the Muslim League in an attempt to get their fair share of representation.

Unlike in the past, when the Congress(I) entered into some sort of a *quid pro quo* agreement with the Majlis, there is no such arrangement for these elections. Even though the Muslim majority constituencies are few and far apart, in many constituencies they constitute the marginal difference between victory and defeat.

In addition to the Muslims, there are dissatisfied politicians within the state party. Last fortnight, the party expelled 85 "rebel" Congressmen who had defied a party fiat and entered the fray as independents fighting against the party's official candidates, or had been working against the party's interest. They included 15 sitting MLA's, three of whom were ministers in the Anjiah Cabinet. These, according to veteran observers, were the ones that had stepped out of line and could be identified. "The greater problem arises from those who are sulking and may work against the party from the scenes," said a senior civil serv

IN KARNATAKA, acting o from Delhi, Rao issued a ste ing to partymen, who planned as rebel candidates, that they expelled from the Congress(I) years. The Opposition hopes for ful rebel group within the ruling would throw it out of gear did terialise with only a dozen sitti who were denied seats defying command and none of them bein ful enough to shake the Congres parent confidence. When Rao persuade the rebels to withdraw minations, all of them were expe the party without fuss, indica party's determination to quell an dant forces within its organisation.

Fortunately for the party, th were not concentrated in one po spread over several districts, red impact of any potential thre Kolar, Dharwar, and Tumkur had two rebels each, while the oth as far-flung as Gulbarga and Ra Bellary and Mysore. In Bellary, Hassan, Mandya and South Kana the biggest exodus from the part pected, it turned out to be a dar with dissidence being reduced to and finally acceptance. H N Gowda, the MP from Hassan, sa loyalists are with the party."

With the threat of a revolt w party fizzling out, the Congress(I) high gear for its election campaig had already started preparing th nths before polls were declared state. The ministers in charge of point programme for each distric

Karunakaran (left) and Sharm

them, ostensibly to review the pro but in reality to assess the mood electorate and report on the state party's grass roots organisation. Th of this study as well as the impress several trusted Congress(I) MP's w quietly toured the state, indicate there were no serious election iss reatening the ruling party and th Gandhi's vote bank had not shown

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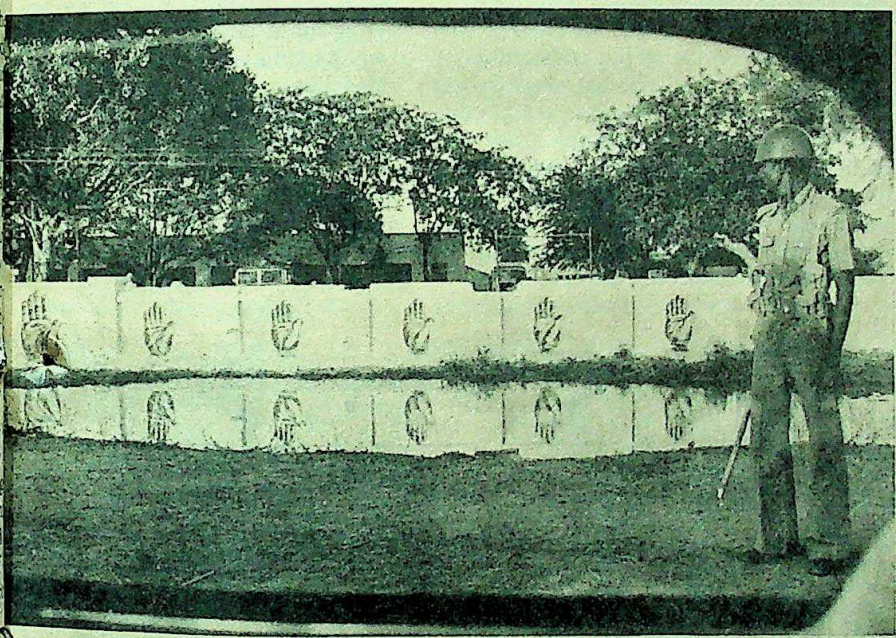
ie. The main threat came from the ad or hilly districts of Karnataka the farmers were in ferment and the age agitation had burned fiercely for ile. Much of the Congress(I) election gy was based on these premises.

Elaborate Arrangements: To guide the aign, a control room was set up in tate Government's sprawling Kumara a guest-house, presided over by for- AICC(I) president Shankar Dayal ma, with Kerala Chief Minister K. nakaran, Rajya Sabha member Sat Mittal and Sports Minister Buta to supervise the entire election cam- In addition, half a dozen Central ters like Finance Minister Pranab herjee, Defence Minister R. Venkata- n, Agriculture Minister Rao Birendra



Congress(I) election symbol: a poor image

h, Health Minister Shankaranand, sport Minister C.M. Stephen and ster of State for Railways Jaffer ief were drafted to boost the morale the local leaders. Said Sharma: we are sure of a massive victory, hould not be lethargic either." A mi- administrative or organisational lapse cost a couple of seats. Adds Mittal: have chalked out a foolproof election egy and each and every Congress(I) er is involved in the election pro- According to Mittal, an expert in ion dynamics, in Karnataka over 0 active Congress(I) workers were in- d in building up an atmosphere in r of the ruling party. Claims Gundu "It is Indira wave all over. We have to cash it by giving jobs to each r and worker."

More than in Andhra Pradesh, there was considerable resentment in Congress(I) ranks at the large influx of outsiders to take over key functions and even plan election strategy. At one point, this was the subject of ridicule when Pranab Mukherjee, who arrived in Bangalore hotfoot from Delhi on December 18 proceeded to lecture members of various election committees on how to go about winning an election. At the end of one such lecture, one participant quipped, "Now we have to learn it from a person who has never won an election in his lifetime."

According to the guidelines framed by the AICC(I) observers in consultation with Gundu Rao, each candidate was provided five vehicles, 20,000 posters, 200 cloth banners, 10,000 paper and plastic badges and 50,000 pamphlets. In addition, each PCC(I) president and AICC(I) observer in the constituency was given additional vehicles to co-ordinate the election work and the state saw some 1,500 vehicles out on Congress(I) business, making it one of the most expensive campaigns so far.

Expenses: Moreover, each candidate was given Rs 1 lakh to meet his other expenses. According to a Pradesh Congress(I) Committee (PCC-I) office-bearer who is also a taxi-driver, a jeep and an Ambassador cost Rs 500 per day (including fuel and driver's food charges). The total transport cost for 15 days of hectic electioneering in Karnataka itself was Rs 1 crore. Another Rs 2 crore were given in cash to the candidates and Rs 50 lakh were spent on publicity. If the expenses incurred by the candidates themselves are included, the ruling party will be spending at least Rs 5 crore on the election.

Admits Buta Singh: "Undoubtedly elections are becoming very expensive, but each candidate wants to reach the last voter for which he needs resources. We need posters, flags, manifestos and badges. The entire election system has developed in such a manner that we have to score over our political opponents. However, we will like to reduce the expenses because we are the followers of Mahatma Gandhi."

Campaign Plans: Detailing the party's strategy, a senior Congress(I) leader said: "We had decided to begin the war first and establish our presence even before the Opposition got started. Our main attack was two-pronged: Mrs Gandhi was the key vote-puller, not only for bagging the minority community votes, which is a solid base, but also the women. Rajiv was to woo the youth as well as gain experience for future campaigns. Apart from this, we decided we would concentrate our firepower in key constituencies where the Congress(I) was threatened. We are hoping to capture between 160 and 180 seats, out of the 224 in the state."

Rajiv was to fire the first salvo by touring the 12 hostile Bangalore urban constituencies of which the party won only three in the last assembly elections. As soon as he left, Mrs Gandhi toured the sensitive Malnad region before Rajiv returned from Andhra Pradesh to tackle north Karnataka and weave his way through the imaginary centre of the state. Working in tandem, the two systematically covered most of the constituencies, ensuring that when one was in the state the other was touring neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. Said a party leader: "The idea was to keep up a continuous tempo, never allowing the Opposition to get a breathing space and making sure that the Congress(I) presence was felt by the electorate all the time."

It was in their eagerness to serve their Delhi bosses that the state Conress(I) party almost mucked up the launching of the election campaign in the state. As Rajiv was to tour Bangalore, the local district Congress(I) party, headed by M.V. Tiwari, prepared a list of 21 meetings, from 10.30 a.m. to 11 p.m., giving Rajiv barely 10 minutes at each spot. An angry Rajiv reportedly cancelled his meetings and arrived from Delhi only in the evening and finally addressed a more reasonable 14 meetings, holding three the same night and 11 the next day.

The crowd turn-out for Rajiv's meetings at the start was only moderate despite the local Congress party organising

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pandals and coloured lights for most of the functions. In fact, on the first meeting he attended in the Rama Mandir grounds in Rajajinagar, a section of the crowd booed Rajiv when he spoke in English. The last time this happened, several months ago, Rajiv was visibly unnerved. This time, he took it in his stride and continued talking with Gundu Rao interpreting.

Rajiv himself lacked the fire and brimstone in his speeches that is so vital to inspire crowds. Instead of the promised land, he urged electors to shoulder their responsibility, to work hard, think carefully for themselves in casting their vote, and recognise that only when a government and its electorate worked well together could a state prosper. And, he used the Asiad spectacular as a symbol of the government's ability to do things successfully, a message aimed specifically at the youth. Said Rajiv in several of his speeches: "What we did in the Asiad, no one else in the world could do within 18 months. It shows that we can do it." To which the irrepressible Janata Party MP Piloo Mody quiped: "By implication, if you could organise a kabaddi meet you can also run the country."

Election Rhetoric: Mrs Gandhi's meetings displayed the might and money power of the Congress(I). Mrs Gandhi's 20-minute halt in each constituency during the first lap of her election campaign was highly organised. Her status as prime minister provided her with impressive security and added to the glamour of her visit, with two helicopters and the special podiums constructed for every meeting. Her election speeches concentrated on attacking the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). At a largely attended meeting in Hassan, organised on a college playground, she said: "BJP is the old Jan Sangh which grew out of the RSS when it was banned. They remain the same and these are highly communal parties. Mr Vajpayee says it is a secular party. I don't know whether to laugh or to be angry because there is no party more communal, more reponsible for the riots taking place, than the BJP."

Political analysts feel the main reason she singled out the BJP was because, by raising the bogey of Hindu communalism she could capture the Muslim, the Harijan and other minority community votes. She also made scathing attacks against the Janata Party and its alliance with the two communist parties in the state. Said she: "Janata Party is a non-existent party. This ganging up between the extreme right and the extreme left for opportunistic purposes like an election is dangerous an lead to fissiparous tendencies."

Mrs Gandhi's main thrust the Congress(I) could form government, leading to a stron and unity in the country. She so on the issues like backwardness erty and hardly ever mentioned point programme. Invariably s her speeches by reiterating her co Harijans, Girijans, small farm other minority communities. Sh finished with an appeal to vote Congress(I) candidate and even hand to indicate the symbol Congress(I).

BEYOND the NTR phenome opposition parties in both Pradesh and Karnataka a dering in a tide of uncertainty own making. If the Congress(I) vided house, the opposition part tionally at loggerheads with one are a house fallen apart. Quip Rao, "Do you think people will parties whose leaders speak in dif nguages on the same issue? Let decide what they stand for bef stake their claim for power."

Ideology, however, is the leas

Crowds chasing Rama Rao: a charismatic appeal

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ms in the country's ideologically landscape. It is the divisiveness within their own ranks that has immobilised myriad national parties who harbour visions of challenging the creaking Congress(I) election wagon. A divided opposition has always worked to the advantage of the ruling party and with the exception of NTR's one-man band, in both Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh the parties contesting the Congress(I) fall into indefinite, opposing groups whose fragmentation can be gauged from the fact that there are 1,129 non Congress(I) candidates in the fray for Karnataka's 224 constituencies and a staggering 1,495 for Andhra Pradesh's 294 seats.

In Karnataka the main challenge comes from the Janata-led Opposition Front fielding the 120 candidates of the Janata Party, 80 of Kranti Ranga, and 12 of the two communist parties. The brainchild of former chief minister and Mrs Gandhi's confidant Devraj Urs, the front was deprived of a rallying point with Urs's death last June. None of the leaders of the constituent parties has a state-wide pull even though the Janata Party was able to retain 38 per cent of the popular vote in the 1980 Lok Sabha election.

Lonely Party: A combined opposition in Karnataka could have made a dent in the Congress(I)'s seemingly unassailable position, but the inability of the BJP and the Front to come to an adjustment has strengthened the hands of the ruling party. The BJP is flexing its muscles in northern India, trying to test the water. In the recent Kerala elections all of its 69 candidates was returned, most of them losing their deposits. In Karnataka, with where four members in the Assembly, it was holding out for parity with the Janata Party in distribution of seats. Fielding 111 candidates, the BJP has effectively reduced the number of straight contests in the state to 16. In 29 constituencies where triangular contests occur, the BJP is likely to cut votes not Congress(I) but opposition votes.

Nor is the scene very different in Andhra Pradesh where the NTR juggernaut "will first cut into opposition votes", according to a senior Congress(I) functionary from Delhi who was in the state for the campaign. The line-up, otherwise, is similar, with the Janata, Lok Dal, Republican Party and the two communist groups working together and the BJP kept out by the CPI. The entry of the Congress(J) led by former minister Jagjivan Ram in 87 constituencies has merely compounded the confusion. Ram obviously wants to cut into the Congress(I)'s Harijan vote banks, but his failure to swing votes as Janata leader in 1978 hardly augurs well for his chances this time round.

Scanty Resources: As if all this weren't enough, the opposition campaign suffered from a palpable lack of funds. In Karnataka, party workers who rang up Ramakrishna Hegde, general secretary of the Janata Party, who was coordinating the election campaign, were told bluntly that the only help the party could provide was in the way of posters. Admitted Hegde, "The lack of funds has certainly affected our campaigning. We are hoping that the people rally round as they did in the north in 1977." That is plain wishful thinking, for even after the Janata wave, the Congress(I) swept all but one of the state's 28 Lok Sabha seats in 1977.

Even so, the Opposition was sparing no effort with men such as Morarji Desai, Madhu Dandavate, Piloo Mody, Subramaniam Swamy, Chandrasekhar and Syed Shahabuddin working out intensive campaign itineraries. The BJP kicked off its campaign with men like Atal Behari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani.

Meagre Response: A typical—and revealing—example of the opposition campaign was Desai's tour of constituencies in Karnataka's Bangalore-Mysore belt, where the Janata Party has traditionally a good base. Desai's meetings turned out to be poorly attended and indifferently organised. In Sathanur the public address system came by bullock-cart only five minutes after Desai, and the scraggly crowd of a 100-odd farmers prompted him to ask aloud, "Is that all we could get?" The local Janata Party candidate K.G. Srinivasmurthy responded by saying that Desai's tour programme had been received late and given another half-hour they could have mustered a larger audience.

The Front's other major component, Kranti Ranga, lost a powerful vote-getting force when Karnataka screen hero Raj Kumar had second thoughts about jumping into the fray on the side of Kranti Ranga leader S. Bangarappa. Kumar is spreading his tentacles in the film distribution business and other activities and is reported to have felt he would risk his business success if he chose an anti-establishment line. Even so, Bangarappa says cockily, "Our chances are bright, the vote banks are highly disgusted with Mrs Gandhi."

Telugu Desam campaign material: high-profile presence

The BJP, on its part, brushes aside Mrs Gandhi's charges that it is communal and turns its cannons on corruption and government high-handedness. Said A.K. Subbiah, Karnataka BJP president, "It is only when a party has nothing to project on its own that it brings in personalities to collect votes." Said Advani scornfully, "The Gundu Rao Government is one conducted by Delhi on telephone."

Issueless Campaign: Plaguing the Opposition in both states is the virtual lack of election issues. In Andhra, the NTR wave has washed aside all other considerations. In Karnataka, where farmer lobbies have a strong potential to swing votes, their leaders have opted against supporting any political party, which will help the ruling party. If they had taken a strong anti-government line, "it would have upset our horoscopes," a senior Congressman said. The language dispute which was a millstone around Gundu Rao's neck till he defused it last November, has become, as Bangarappa put it, "a dead issue".

If there is any one potential issue which buoys opposition confi-

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dence, it is in Karnataka where a raging controversy has broken out about the misuse of official machinery by the ruling party. And last fortnight when Election Commission Secretary K. Ganeshan flew to Bangalore to look at opposition charges, it was a clear indication that the Opposition had turned up trumps. The controversy broke into the open when the Bangalore-based *Deccan Herald* published a report in its issue of December 12 citing a teleprinter circular of December 10 from the inspector-general of police to superintendents of police in all districts to ensure that only official Congress(I) candidates filed nominations, and not the party's rebels.

Thin Justification: The Government has not denied the implications of the circular published in the *Deccan Herald* but one official told INDIA TODAY: "There is a provision in the Police Act that communication facilities could be used in cases of emergency by a member of the public." But in Kolar and Mandya districts, where teleprinters do not exist, messages were filed by police radio. In the circumstances, the justification is thin, and made less than convincing by other circumstances. Even as the Election Commission investigates the charge, BJP President Subbiah and the party's Chamarajpet candidate, M. Eswara Rao, have filed writ petitions in the High Court charging the Congress(I) with misusing police facilities to shadow candidates and provide information about them.

Other examples the Opposition cites are:

► allotment of all state government guest-houses to ruling party leaders;

► installation of telephones and hot-

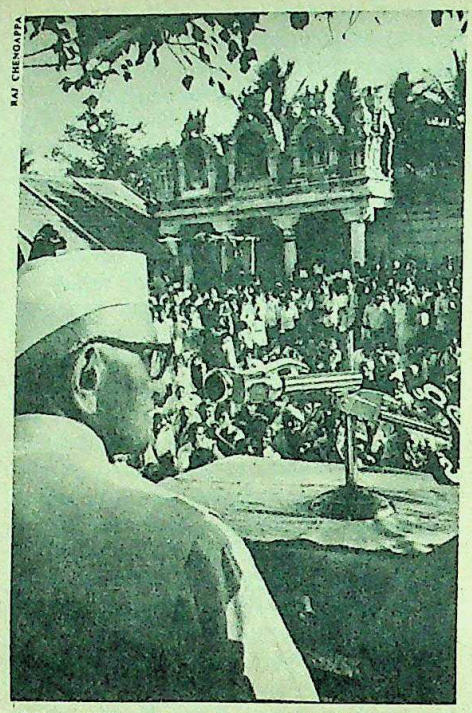
Vajpayee and Mody

lines on priority basis, denying them to opposition parties;

► using the state's information department for preparing hand-outs and photographs for Congress(I) election meetings;

► using land revenue, sales and excise and urban land development officials to collect money for the ruling party;

► use of government officials by ministers—both state and Central—on election duty.



RAJ CHENGAPPA

Morarji Desai campaigning in Karnataka

Buta Singh was quite categorical: "There is no misuse of machinery. The present Government is in office and it has the mandate to function. I have come here as AICC(I) observer; that does not mean that I have shed my ministerial responsibilities. Officials do come to me with files for clearance. We cannot stop the administration. We are also discharging our ministerial duties to which we are bound by oath."

ULTIMATELY, the real battle is in the vast countryside of Andhra Pradesh. Mrs Gandhi was being less than charitable when she described the NTR bandwagon as a "political joke" perpetrated by one who did not know anything about politics. But in one sense at least she came close to the truth. For the NTR phenomenon has shown up an absurd fragility in the country's political system where a rank outsider can, in the space of a mere nine months, ride a popular tide strong enough to seriously challenge a national party on the verge of celebrating its centenary. Veteran observers of the Andhra Pradesh political scene are baffled by the political implications of NTR's enormous success on the campaign trail. Says Balwant Reddy of the Administrative Staff College in Hyderabad: "He gives articulation to discontent and a chance for change. But we have to see how his charisma will translate into votes." Hampering this translation is the fact that Telugu Desam lacks organi-

sational clout. Though the party village-level elections, NTR admi absence of effective cadres. Says he organisation is built, I'll continue one-man executive."

Barring last minute sevings, TODAY election forecast indica NTR is riding a phenomenal political popularity—but that short of cutting the ground fro the Congress(I) and preventing forming a government. Whether there is an upset, there are cogen to be learnt. If, unexpectedly, N ceeds in crashing his way Congress(I) citadel of Andhra and somehow forming a ministry undoubtedly signal a powerful me the Congress(I) that its halycon finished, that discontent has rea credible proportions, and that torate is no longer prepared to re ssive but is willing to use the pow vote in favour of change.

If, on the other hand, the Co is able to retain power but has t with a powerful Telugu Desam-le sition, it should give the ruling par to consider its performance and p and the state of its own health w been vitiated by a scale of infighti befitting a borstal than the ruling the world's largest democracy.

Such a lesson is long overdue less it is powerfully administered. complacency may yet return. A tottering giant that the Congres become may well continue to he tiably on its way to the 1985 Elections, now a mere two years And, the irony of it is that if the

Subbiah and Bangarappa

Pradesh election sets off any reapp will not be because someone wi party has seized the reins powerfully directing the lethargic, divided part a new track. It will be because charisma of one man without an sation, whose chief claim to fame is luloid one, that he is his state's t star.

—SUMAN DUBEY, PRABHU CHAWL CHENGAPPA and AMARNATH K.

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TRIPURA

The East Is Red

THE QUESTION in Tripura is not whether the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) will win but ner the Congress(I) will be able to get st a marginal hold in the 60-member Assembly. The CPI-M, conscious that ve years in office have eroded their larity somewhat, have unleashed a powered and meticulously organised in which got under way in early mber. By the middle of the month the headquarters resembled the control of a very complex operation, lea- in no doubt that the party meant bu- Said Bhanu Ghosh, the party's secretary: "We have launched a cam- which is more high-powered than in revious election. We felt it should be we are now contesting as the ruling and any loss of seats would be a re- on on our performance during the ive years."

Arriving in Agartala on December 21, Gandhi made this five-year perfor- her target of attack. Saying that she resisted imposing Central rule in spite ing urged to do so in the state in the of the Mandai massacre in 1980, she on to accuse the Left Front Govern- of not utilising the funds provided he Centre for developmental work. bing this opportunity to attack the xist leaders as a whole she said that encouraged Naxalites in all states but e ones they ruled. The prime minister spoke of her fears that there would be ents of rigging and booth capturing asked the Election Commission and ate Government to ensure "free and lections".

Unfortunately the state unit of the ress(I) had not been able to match Gandhi's campaign tactics to sway chanted sections of the electorate. In December they were still squabbling posters and flags, the deployment of jeeps and most important, there was evitable battle for seats. This leaves with barely a fortnight to reach the s before the January 5 election. Said a g party worker: "There is no point in aring us with the Marxists who are a lined cadre-based force while we are cratic and hence a loose organi- n."

Conflicting Stands: This elasticity to be reflected in the ideological The Congress(I) is in the unhappy ion of trying to woo both the 114 tribal and Bengali voters at the same time. The party has allied with the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS) in an attempt to break the Marxist hold on the state's 5 lakh tribals. Not content with trying to influence one section of the electorate, the Congress(I) is taking a diametrically opposite line with the 16 lakh Bengalis. They are being told that the Marxists have been too soft on the tribals for political reasons. This means that in the 16 constituencies it is contesting with the TUJS the Congress(I) is campaigning on a totally different platform from the one in the remaining 42.

The Marxists have not failed to exploit these double standards. Said Chief Minister Nripen Chakravarty: "While the Congress(I) accuses us of pampering the tribals they are themselves working at electoral adjustments with an organisation whose leaders have close links with the extremists who are underground. It's strange that they should be doing this when their leader, Indira Gandhi, herself is condemning regional politics." It is very possible that in their attempt to please the entire 21 lakh population in the state, the Congress(I) may end up pleasing no one.

Chakravarty: a high-powered performance

To make matters worse, the alliance with the TUJS is not favoured by a sizeable chunk of the party. The President of the state unit of the Congress(I), Ashoke Bhattacharya, has always opposed any move towards the tribal-dominated TUJS but former chief minister Sukhamoy Sengupta and former Maharaja Kirit Bikram Deb Burman were able to convince the Central leadership that this was desirable. Consequently it is not clear how much real cooperation the Congress(I) will extend to the TUJS candidates. Said Bhattacharya ambiguously: "There are around 4,000 tribal votes even in the non-reserved seats and we thought it would be a good idea to get as much of these votes as possible through seat adjustments with the TUJS. But there is no question of continuing an alliance with them."

Negative Factors: Sections of the TUJS seem equally unenthusiastic. Said TUJS MLA Nagendra Jamatia: "Their candidates are not at all good and this has affected our chances." Another thing that has affected their chances is that extremist tribal leaders like Bejoy Hrankhal and Benoda Jamatia have given a call for a poll boycott—a factor that will probably play havoc in the 17 reserve constituencies, 14 of which the TUJS is supposed to win for the Congress(I).

According to Nagendra Jamatia some of the TUJS candidates have already received threatening mail from the underground. Once recipient is Jadunath Tripura who has been advised to boycott the election or face dire consequences. Jamatia felt that these persistent calls of boycott and intimidation would "cause our voters to stay away which will be to the advantage of the Marxists".

The TUJS have not been the only victims of violence. The car carrying Minister for Tribal Welfare Dasarath Deb was attacked twice in the space of four days by extremists and during the second attack, on December 22, a police constable and the driver of the car were killed and two others were seriously injured. On December 23, five policemen were killed in an ambush at Ziolchera. All through December several public transport vehicles have been waylaid resulting in the loss of nine lives so far. There have also been stray stabbings. The Government has adopted stringent security measures and hopes that the extremists will lie low as they did in Nagaland.

Money Power: The Congress(I), too, is hoping for a repeat of events in Nagaland and has started pumping money into Tripura just as they did in Nagaland. It is evident from the electioneering paraphernalia that what the candidates lack in organisation they more than make up in money supply. When asked about the expenditure on each candidate, Bhattacharya replied mysteriously: "Sorry, I cannot let you into a secret which is known to only a handful of people." He was more expansive about the reason for his secrecy. Apparently, Bhattacharya, like the prime minister, was a devotee of Anandamayee Maa who, he says, had advised him "never to

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tell anybody what my age is and how much money I have in my pocket."

But money cannot solve all the problems for the Congress(I). This was evident from the scenes at Bhattacharya's spacious house where a large number of Congress(I) workers had gathered to argue vociferously. The cause of the conflict was the posters and flags flown in from New Delhi and the jeeps sent by the party high command. The posters and flags had been forcibly removed by candidates who commanded the most manpower from the Congress Bhavan.

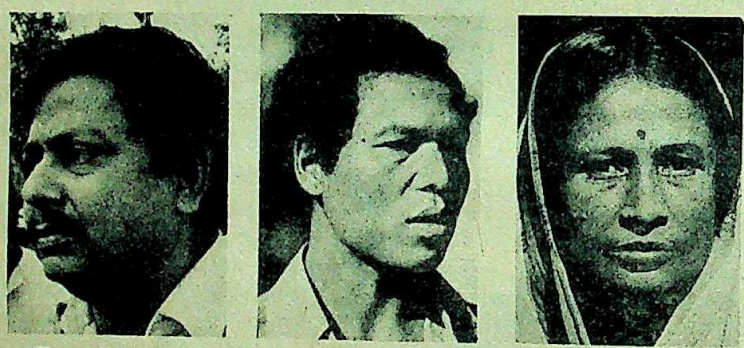
When Bhattacharya returned home in time to have accusations hurled at him, he snapped: "Do you think the pradesh president has time to think of such things as posters?" He went on to advise the irate workers to approach the All India Congress Committee(I) (AICC-I) observers, Rajendra Kumari Bajpayee, Ram Dulari Sinha and P.K. Thungon, who were camping at the circuit house.

But this pales into insignificance with the trouble Bhattacharya and Bajpayee have had in selecting candidates. Though only four rebel Congressmen are in the fray it is not an insignificant number in an election where every win counts for the Congress(I) after its total rout in 1977. Says Basana Chakravarty, a state Congress minister between 1972 and 1977, and independent candidate from Barjola: "I am contesting the election as an independent to record my protest at the way in which the list of candidates was finalised leaving out many senior and trusted workers." As if echoing these sentiments one voter said that the only time he had heard of the Congress(I) candidate of his constituency before the elections was when the politician was thrown out of a hotel for drunken behaviour.

Chaotic Campaigns: Confusion was also rife in Belonia where the official candidate, Subrata Chowdhury, did not file his nomination to make way for veteran Congressman Manoranjan Mazumdar. Mazumdar had decided to stand as an independent when he was denied a ticket by party bosses and it was alleged that Chowdhury stepped down after being intimidated by the rebel candidate's men. Sachindra Dewanji, a close associate of President Bhattacharya maintained: "Subrata Chowdhury stepped down of his own accord"; but whatever the truth, the fact remains that Belonia has no official Congress(I) candidate and the party is backing Mazumdar whose symbol is the cycle, chosen by all the independent candidates, not the hand.

CPI-M posters in Agartala: strong hold

At Majlishpur the scene is even more bizarre. Deepak Nag, a rebel Congressman who is standing as an independent, has arranged processions for himself complete with portraits of Mrs Gandhi and party flags. All this has arisen, according to informed sources, because Bhattacharya, who spends most of his time in New Delhi, has lost touch with the working of the party in the state.



(From left) PCC(I) President Bhattacharya, TUJS leader Nagendra Jamatia and Congress(I) rebel candidate Basana Chakravarty

The point was illustrated when Bhattacharya calmly proclaimed that Basana Chakravarty "is not a member of our party" only a few hours after Barjola's independent candidate had shown INDIA TODAY her receipts for membership fees. When Bhattacharya was informed of this, his astounded reply was: "How can that have been? I am the president and I should have known!"

The CPI-M, too, has things to worry about. The party has lost support in many of the Bengali-dominated areas in the plains after the riots that were triggered off by the Mandai massacre when 300 people died. This when the Bengalis form a two-thirds majority is serious. But the Marxists are counting on the Congress(I)-TUJS alliance to work wonders for them. To refurbish the image the party has called in all the big guns like E.M.S. boodiripad, B.T. Ranadive, Sama herjee and a host of ministers fro Bengal, to tour the state extensiv 73-year-old chief minister started bit over a month ago and has kep momentum of his 20-hour daily And all this effort is being backed of the 6,000 party members who organisational and administrative nery going by working past midnig day.

Favourable Signs: The Marxis ve that the Congress(I) alliance TUJS will not cut into their solid the tribal votes. What backs this o is that the tribals got their first self-administration in the 28 Autonomous State Councils start Left Front Government. In the election held in January this CPI-M got 19 seats, their all more and the rest went to the through the year the Council involved in developmental work associated as it is with the Ma pull in votes.

Another factor sure to work for xists is that in and its neighbour nearly every third government emplo belongs to the Ma minated Employee dination Committe past five years th mittee has gathered clout that it has come an extra-co onal authority in th

It is no secret that mittee member today wields more than a departmental head. Thou chief minister is unhappy with this affairs there is little he can do abo this situation it is unlikely that vernment employee will vote for a in ministry.

If the Congress(I) is hoping for a repeat of the Nagaland patter more realistic observers expect is a tion of West Bengal. It is unlikely Marxists will get the same respons 1977 when they bagged 52 sea their allies the Revolutionary S Party and the Forward Bloc two ea TUJS with four formed the only opp After five years in power that kind jority is hard to achieve. But there doubt that the red flag will continu over Tripura, and the Marxists will nue to reign—but not with absolute macy.

—SUMANTA SEN in

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ODA RIOTS

Strife In The Streets

WITH communal strife alarmingly on the increase, Baroda was once again gripped by violence last fortnight after rumspread that the city Police Comsioner Jaspal Singh, 49, had been oved by the state Government due to sure from Muslim leaders. At the end hree days, in what was the 19th such lent in this year, the city was left with dead and over 70 injured. Eight died to stab wounds while others succbed to police firings in which over 65 nds and 200 tear-gas shells were fired. on and shop looting was widespread n over 100 cases being reported, and rly 500 people were arrested.

When the situation continued to be se after 24 hours, the army and as ny as 26 companies of the SRP, the CRP l the BSF were called in to aid the police quelling the fast spreading riot. In all re were an unprecedented 5,000 police sonnel patrolling the streets. Curfew clamped on nearly 60 per cent of the which has a population of nearly 7.5 which 12 per cent are Muslims. As urbances continued to spread to areas ich had never witnessed communal uble before, curfew was not relaxed for ee days. Worst affected were Wadi, a onic trouble-spot which is heavily gested, as well as some areas of Raoa and Mandvi. Brickbats, broken glass, smoke billowing out of blackened ps and vehicles were grim reminders of of the worst riots that Baroda has in recent years.

The riot took a serious turn with the ing of 26 guns and 6,700 cartridges n a firearms shop. It took the police e days to officially declare this since ey could not contact the owner". prehensive Baroda citizens feared s by the culprits. However, as stigations began, eight guns and 846 idges were found abandoned in public es four days later, and the spate of ures continues.

Early Violence: Quite clearly, the nt communal situation was already on boil five days before Singh's transfer December 13. As often in the past, petition within the flourishing bootng industry between Muslims and lars, a scheduled caste community, d communal expression. Baroda's t liquor sales are reputed to net Rs 1 daily and it is alleged that a *hafta* totalling Rs 60 lakh is annually paid to police officials and political bosses—a charge that has laid them open to allegations of partisanship in previous riots. On December 6–7 a Kahar, Chhanalal, was murdered in retaliation for an assault of a Muslim earlier. On December 8, in Bhawmanpura Wadi and Pani Gate areas four people were attacked, of whom one belonged to a minority community, and curfew was clamped. Tension was further building up over police excesses in the earlier riot in October.

In actuality, Singh's transfer which was taken as a set-back for the Hindus was demanded by neither community. Muslim workers had indeed demanded the transfer of Deputy Commissioner R.K.

PICTURES BY PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

The police pushing a suspected rioter: brusque treatment

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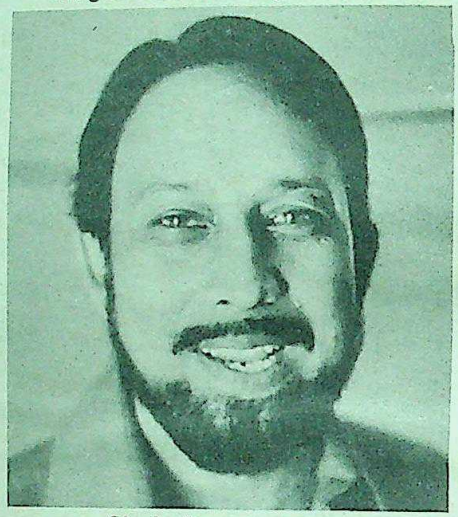
Vashistha and three or four officers of the rank of inspectors and sub-inspectors—over which Singh himself had expressed fears of a communal reaction from the Hindus. His own transfer was probably decided at a top-level meeting at Gandhinagar, where the communal situation was reviewed and found to be unsatisfactory. Clearly the promise that Singh's appointment had earlier held out had not been vindicated by his 77-day-old tenure. The decision was conveyed to him by the state Home Secretary R.V. Chandramouli on December 12.

News of Singh's removal spread like wildfire in the city and already present tensions escalated into violence. Five hundred students marched in a procession shouting slogans demanding his reinstatement. Said an indignant Singh to INDIA TODAY: "I could understand the Government's desire to remove me had they any grouse. In fact, I was told by Home Secretary Chandramouli, that the Government was extremely happy with me. Obviously political pressures have acted. I was extremely popular with the people and so I warned Chandramouli that there would be disturbances if I was transferred." Alleging that riots broke out after Singh met "some people" after returning from Gandhinagar, the Gujarat Government has charged him of "skipping away from the responsibility and handing over the city to anti-social elements".

Controversial Role: Brought in on the elevated rank of additional inspector general of police to set things right in Baroda, Singh's brief tenure was shrouded in controversy. Adopting a high public profile Singh was alleged to have hobnobbed with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swyamsewak Sangh (RSS) workers, and known trouble-making elements among the majority community on the plea of maintaining excellent public relations so as to get to the root of the recurring communal trouble. Said an obviously piqued P.N. Writer, director-general of police: "He has now burnt his boats. This is no way for a responsible officer to behave."

Singh's associations generated considerable uneasiness among the M and led to a perceptible toughen their stance amid general allegatio police atrocities. Last month, Zafar dukwala, an MS University le formed a Young Muslim Action Co tee to act both as a forum and a pr group. Bandukwala sought to pu police beating of innocent Muslims kutpura and Nalbandwada after stabbing incidents took place nearb committee also displayed photogra victims of police "excesses" on b streets. After the riots broke out, B wala's house was attacked and so wards, he dissolved the committee. retaliation subsequently took the fo numerous posters of Hindu gods blood marks on them. Bandukwala rested last fortnight for "instigating munal feelings".

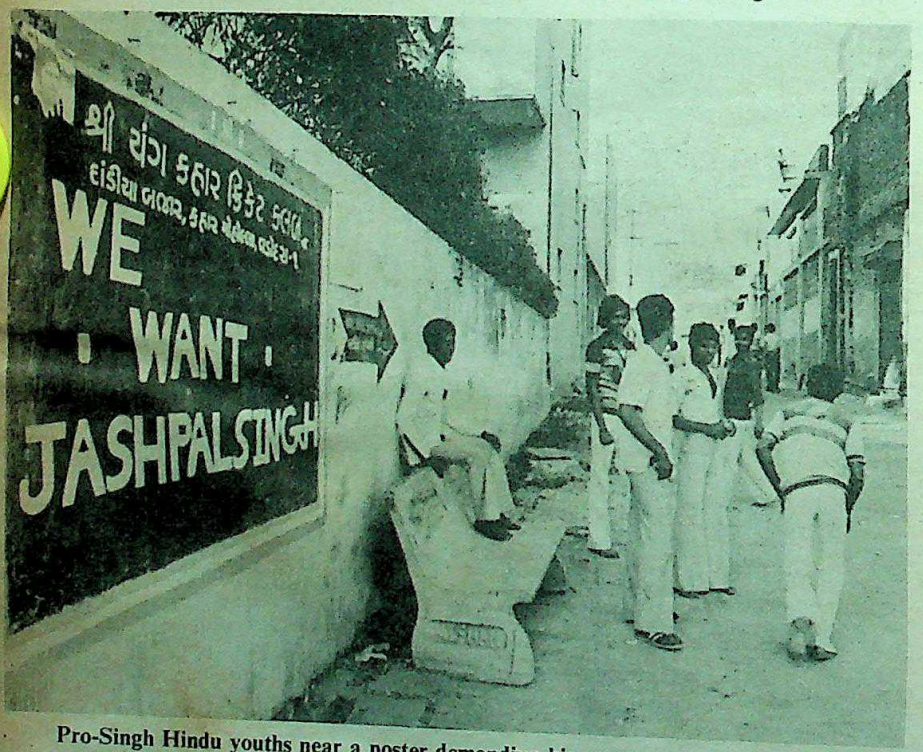


Singh: dangerous game

In a more disturbing developme city's Mayor, Jatin Modi, 46, was d out of a Bombay-bound train, forcib to a garden in the heart of the ci surrounded by over 1,000 youngster humiliated him with abuses agai family members and left only af agreed to resign from the party. Th day, students also gheraoed various gress(I) corporators and made them "in protest against Singh's transfer" terrified councillors fearing assau in, the move smacked of the histo Nirman days of 1975 when students Chimanbhai Patel's ministry to resig led to the first Janata coalition g ment in Gujarat. Dramatically, the with the resignation of Mayor Modi wed closely by 18 of his party coun the Congress(I) strength declined to a house of 60.

Varied Reactions: Their respons the record, however, varied. Said Mo resigned as the police failed to p even the mayor while he was being handled on the main streets of Bar the Government cannot even prote mayor, how can the common man for safety?" Said Councillor A Mehta, 42: "Singh was making ef neutralise communal tension. They ved him when sensitive feelings wer ning high." Said Councillor Ashok hela, 40: "I quit the Congress(I) bec am sympathetic to the Hindus' reser against Singh's transfer." Even so, menting on the development an unp bed Home Minister Raval said: "N has either joined or quit the party."

On December 14 a Baroda d D.V. Nene, filed a suit in the court senior division city judge to restra Government from transferring Another Baroda citizen, Rusi Contr



Pro-Singh Hindu youths near a poster demanding his return: aggressive support

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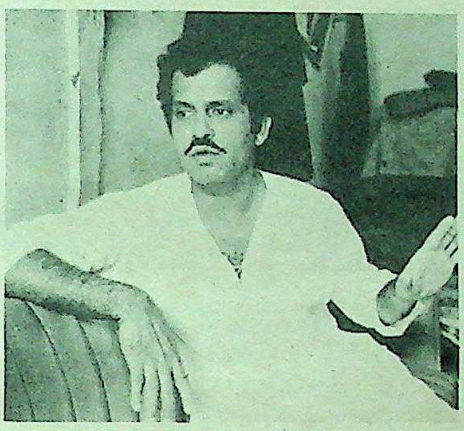
became a plaintiff in the case. With court granting an interim stay, the order was served on Director-General Writer Nene's lawyer Mahendra Vyas on the same day. He was, however, informed that was ineffective as another officer P.K. Patta had already taken over as police Commissioner, Baroda. In retaliation, the State Government filed an affidavit in the same court demanding that Nene's suit be dismissed as he had no locus standi. With the case coming up for hearing by January 3, a protracted legal battle is certain. Interestingly, Nene is a Hindu Mahasabha worker and Vyas, a well-known sympathiser of the BJP.

THE RECENT outbreak of violence had an interesting genesis in which the Moharram clash in October between Muslims and Kahars fuelled Muslim misgivings about harsh and discriminatory handling of communal tensions by the police. In the sporadic incidents of stabbing from October 22 onwards that presaged the major outbreak of violence on October 27, the police, particularly the CIP, allegedly played a role ranging from passive non-involvement to terrorising.

Following the imposition of curfew, Muslims had decided not to install *tazias* and subsequently did so only on the assurance of Home Minister Raval. Surprisingly, however, they were penalised by the police for doing so and in the resultant firing 22 were injured and 70 arrested, of which nine were Hindus and the rest Muslims; 56 Muslims were charged under Section 360, whereas the Hindus were released after being taken to the police station. The contentious matter of whether the police ignored the home minister's instructions or whether he neglected to direct them to allow the installation of tazias remains an open question.



Deputy Mayor Bapu: registering protest

Reprisal by a rival bootlegger was presumably responsible for the escalation of violence that followed the *tazia* procession on October 27. Here the police played a quiescent role and from October 29 onwards, allegedly engaged in systematic terrorising. The total was seven lives lost, 55 injured and 622 arrested of which significantly, 540 were Muslims.

Bootlegging Politics: With the politics of bootlegging as a definite undercurrent, this was hardly communal conflict in the traditional sense—there was neither a dispute over the procession of tazias or their route nor were there any evident political ambitions. Baroda had no Muslim MP's or MLA's. Out of 60 councillors in the municipal corporation only seven were Muslims, six of whom were Congress(I) and one an independent. Out of these, five including Deputy Mayor Syed Nisar Bapu resigned in protest against police excesses, the other two being from localities not affected. They were later under official pressure to withdraw their resignations on the assurance that police officers found guilty would be transferred. Shortly afterwards, their resentment was conveyed to Congress(I) leaders in New Delhi by a delegation which also submitted a memorandum to Mrs Gandhi complaining of police

The debris of a riot strewn on a Baroda street: grim reminder

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action last fortnight after some stabbings took place in the city.

In a distressing development, the recurrence of riots and the resultant fear psychosis have evinced a rise of young militants and a resurgence of both communities who have used every opportunity for a show of strength. Religious festivals in Baroda which were, till recently, celebrated as normally as any other city are no longer the same. Last month, a procession of Lord Vishnu attracted a record number of 60,000 participants as opposed to the normal 7,000. The whole city was lavishly illuminated. Similarly, Moharram was celebrated with great ostentation.

Groupism and faction rivalries within the state unit of the Congress(I) have compounded an already complex situation. One such major divide is between the groups of Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki and Finance Minister Sanat Mehta. In fact the findings of a committee set up in June 1981 by the then acting GPCC(I) president Mahipat Mehta alleged that infighting and the patronage of police factions were major causes of communal tension in Baroda. While Mehta has now quit the party, the bonafides of the committee were rejected by Solanki

Confidence Eroded: Even as Fatehsinhrao Gaekwad, former MP and Maharaja, pointed out that people had lost confidence in the Government and emphasised that drastic measures were needed to restore it, Union Home Minister P.C. Sethi and Defence Minister R. Venkataraman visited the riot-torn town on December 20. In an interim effort at relieving the tension-charged situation, they suggested variously the setting up of a high-powered relief committee of the police, the army and state government officials; a study group to go into the causes of recurring violence in the city; and a peace committee to restore communal harmony between the two communities.

Notwithstanding these, it was clear that openly paraded caste prejudices and bitterness between the two communities had peaked and it would take a long time for the wounds to heal. On the face of it, communalism continued to manifest itself as a law and order problem. But as Director General of Police Writer reminded: "If it was, we would have succeeded in tackling it long ago. Leaders of both communities and the people will have to put their heads together and decide not to play into the hands of vested interests." And as sporadic bomb blasts continued to erupt on December 21, 10 hours after the relaxation of the curfew in all the troubled areas, they were a grim reminder of the spreading malaise. —RAMESH MENON in Baroda

BHAWAN SINGH

Chief Minister Bhosale: out on a limb

MAHARASHTRA

The Mimic Men

BABASAHEB Bhosale, the Maharashtra chief minister, stuck for 11 months on the amber signal, is finally seeing the lights change. And, to his discomfiture, they are likely to change into red as far as his career is concerned. With 111 of his own party MLA's out of a total of 236 arrayed against him in a signature campaign demanding his removal, the majority of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee (I) (MPCC I) treating him as anathema, and the party high command lending receptive ears to his detractors' plaint, the days of Bhosale seem hopelessly numbered.

Gulabrao Patil

The cliff-hanger last fortnight, in which his partymen attempted to bring a privilege motion against him on the floor of the legislative Assembly as well as the council, ended with tacit assurance given by the high command that the much-awaited change would come shortly after the January 5 poll in three states. Left with practically no weighty ally in the state, and battling it out with hundreds of aimed tha dent MLA's remote-controlled by seaide". warriors of Maratha politics, the The minister's only hope now rests on the most im nificence of his leader, Mrs Gandhi er as th chances of that are remote, as the itially, t dents have established the sheer fantulay t their majority in an unambiguous mafference, buffoo

They have professed an a few no former chief minister sed on t "senior leader of the igh Cour was behind their move e basis c their steps have been syn inister ha nised with utmost cautio verted at care by the present trin ass h w the Maharashtra Cong ry. But politics: Yeshwantrao y begar wantrao Chavan; Vasa hosale, as Dada Patil, general sec Bhosal of the All India Congress -the-cuff mittee (I) (AICC-I) and ion. He mer chief minister of rashtra; and Abdul Rehman An ho resent Bhosale's predecessor in the chief mi ays so t rial chair. Blessed by their unseen h st." The the MLA's are likely to win the first r the un They have struck at a sensitive hour: t he h elections are announced in neighbo onths, d states. They have showed their rea New D to fight out issues in the open. gh comn

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dging their bait with profuse protestations of loyalty to Mrs Gandhi, they have shown that their loyalty can be bought only at a price. The chosen venue was Nagpur, the main city of the state's Vidarbha region, comprising eight districts, where the Assembly was in session since December 13.

The high-points of the drama at Nagpur were:

- the heckling of the chief minister by his own partymen at a session-eve meeting of the Congress(I) Legislature Party (CLP) in which he was abused in unprintable language and had to be whisked away in a police car, leaving his shoes behind;
- as its fall-out, six dissident MLA's—Vasantrao Patil, Ram Pendagle, Premanand Jawale, Satish Chaturvedi, Ashok Patil and Haryakanta Patil—were suspended from the CLP as well as the party. Of the six, four are hard core supporters of Antulay;
- the chief minister described the dissidents as "impotent". At a press conference, he rhymed it out in Marathi: "Bhasha bandachi/Vrutti gundachi/Kruti nandachi" (The language is that of a rebel/the mind is that of a hoodlum/but quite impotent when it comes to action);
- as its consequence, the dissidents brought a privilege motion against the chief minister in both Houses; and
- sent Gulabrao Patil, the MPCC(I) chief, to New Delhi with an anti-Bhosale memorandum signed by 111 MLA's. Patil claimed that "at least 50 others are on our side".

The trouble with Bhosale began almost immediately after he had taken over as the chief minister early in 1982. Initially, the hard core supporters of Antulay treated him with a sullen indifference, and described him privately as a "buffoon" who would not last more than a few months. Their calculation was based on the fond hope that the Bombay High Court judgment against Antulay, on the basis of which the controversial chief minister had lost his post, would soon be reverted at the Supreme Court, and their party would return to power in full glory. But the hope disappeared soon, and they began taking a new, hard look at Bhosale, as if he were an interloper.

Bhosale, in one of his rough-hewn off-the-cuff jokes, summed up the situation. He said: "Antulay is like a widow who resents the housewife next door and says so that she too loses her husband first." The metaphor is not quite polished, but the underlying truth is undeniable. In fact he had no peace in the past 11 months, during which he paid 17 trips to New Delhi, mostly to "apprise the high command of the latest situation".

Y. B. Chavan (top) and Vasantdada Patil: professing aloofness

Invariably, the "situation" turned grimmer and grimmer for him. His last attempt to win friends and influence people—by way of expanding the council of ministers—boomeranged on him instead of solving his problems. In course of the expansion, he axed some of his friends who subsequently turned sour towards him, and included some of his enemies whose enmity hardly subsided with the appointment.

Examples of such self-defeating inclusion/exclusion are: the dropping of

Shalinitai Patil (left) and Adik: the rebels within

Momin Vakar Ahmed, who is now a fiery dissident, and the inclusion of Ramrao Adik and Shalinitai Patil into the Cabinet. Both Adik and Patil are regarded as "Trojan horses" in the Bhosale Ministry. A week before the Nagpur session of the Assembly had begun, Adik organised a meeting of dissident MLA's in his ministerial chamber. Recently, about 25 dissident MLA's gathered at Sangli, the home town of Vasantrao Dada Patil, AICC(I) general secretary and Shalinitai's husband. The occasion was Vasantdada's birthday; but it soon turned into an uninhibited display of ire against Bhosale, spiked with some of Shalinitai's famous pithies and pungents. Said Pawar: "We have friends both within and outside the Cabinet. Bhosale is in a minority even within his own cabinet."

Unity: That may be plain pep-talk, but it is true that the anti-Bhosale campaign in Maharashtra has united seemingly irreconciliable factors and groups in the state's politics. Of the 40 MLA's who had crossed over into the Congress(I) with Chavan, the Maratha supremo, 24 have put in their signatures on the anti-Bhosale memorandum. Their leader, Prataprao Bhosale, is now a member of the dissidents' war council. Though Chavan denied that he had any involvement with the dissidents, his followers kept close to the Dhote-Pawar camp and were even breaking bread with known followers of Antulay, the man who was once anathema to Chavan. Similarly, Shalinitai's followers had buried their traditional hatred against Antulay and his supporters. Said Bhai Sawant, MLA from Ratnagiri district and supporter of the Patils: "But for the problem with cement, Antulay provided the best government in recent times."

Says Sawant: "He is a man of vulgar habits, eating too much, sleeping in office, and wallowing in his own rustic jokes." Complains Balasaheb Pawar, MP and arch-dissident: "Bhosale has got such a big head that he does not deem it fit to talk to the MPCC(I) president." Pawar harps on the "damage" Bhosale has inflicted on the organisation. Said he: "After he took over, there were three by-elections in the state, at Thane, Usmanabad and Medshi in Akola district. At Thane, the Congress(I) candidate was defeated by 50,000 votes; at Usmanabad, the seat which we had won earlier had to be conceded to the Opposition, the Congress(I) candidate having lost by 6,000 votes; at Medshi, the margin of victory of the Congress(I) candidate was cut from 30,000 votes two years ago to only 3,000."

Prataprao Bhosale said that the chief minister had only one phrase to splash on all files: "To be discussed." "No wonder that only 20 per cent of the Central allocation for implementing the 20-point plan has been used up so far," he lamented. D.B. Kadam, MLA from Satara district, Bhosale's home town, said the chief minister had become so unpopular that he would lose his deposit if he had

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contested from any Satara constituency.

At the back of it all, however, lies the fact of the chief minister's near-total isolation from his own MLA's and his own cynically poor PR (public relations). He has to contend with a CLP whose members were hand-picked by Antulay (*see interview*). He certainly does not trust most of them, and often shows signs of a testiness that borders on paranoia. Example: recently, three Bombay MLA's, Bhaurao Patil, Ram Pendagle and Premanand Awale, went to Bhosale to tell him that they would resort to a day's token hunger strike as a gesture of sympathy for the striking millworkers. Bhosale flared up and said: "*Aap karke dekhiye. Main bhi dekhunga.*" (You do it first. I'll also see). Immediately afterwards, he issued a press statement condemning the MLA's.

Trusted Aides: Perpetually wary of his own partymen, he reposes his trust only in two of his trusted ministers: T.G. Deshmukh and Srikant Jichkar, the 28-year-old minister of state for home. Deshmukh has a long history of with Antulay, and is thus his 'natural Jichkar, who is an M.D. and a fo member of the IAS and a triple-M.A the most-publicised eligible bachelor i Congress(I), is nevertheless a weak c for the chief minister to hobble on other trusted lieutenant is his sister-in Nirmala Thokal, a chubby-faced, mat Marathi housewife made overnig member of the Upper House. Fulmi Pawar: "Bhosale has no political tea assist him. He has only a kitchen ca

BABASAHEB BHOSALE

Beleaguered

THE BELEAGUERED Maharashtra Chief Minister, Babasaheb Bhosale, has only one natural defence against the slings and arrows of politics: his stoical aloofness. The dissidents have hardly made a dent in two things that he must have: two good meals and a rather long post-lunch nap. On one afternoon at Ramgiri, *the chief minister's official residence in Nagpur, fresh from a mid-day siesta, Bhosale spoke to* INDIA TODAY *Correspondent* SUMIT MITRA. *Excerpts:*

Q. *What is your basic difference with the dissidents?*

A. There is none. There is no principle behind dissidence. Therefore there is no basic difference. Some of the dissident MLA's have personal ambition. Some are instigated by Antulay and other evil forces. And persons whose faith in the leadership is suspicious are doing it (dissident activities) for ulterior motives.

Q. *Your government is accused of non-performance.*

A. If non-performance means indifference to individual matters, then my government can certainly be accused of it. My predecessor was taking interest in individual matters, such as proposal for transfer of officials, de-requisitioning of premises, liquor shop licences. But I've stopped all that. I go by principles that are laid down, written on a piece of paper; principles that are open for everyone to see. Those who think that the job of a government is to distribute personal favours have reasons to feel dissatisfied.

Q. *What is your government's performance in the implementation of the 20-point programme?*

A. Uniformly good. In 17 of the 20 points, we are way above the national average. But you must realise that I was faced with intra-party problems from my first day in office. When I took over, the textile strike was on. Then teachers threatened to go on strike. Then came the Shetkari Andolan. Then Doodh Bhat Andolan. Then the strike by the junior engineers of the state electricity board. Then the police revolt. And now we have these gentlemen who call themselves dissidents.

Q. *Some say your attitude to* MLA's *is insulting. For instance, during the Cabinet reorganisation, you offered only a ministership of state to Gulabrao Patil though he is the* MPCC(I) *president. Why?*

Unlike him (Antulay), I never considered the party or the Government to be my personal property. I always, held that the party was a trust and we are all its trustees.

A. Because Gulabrao Patil is totally ineffective even as the MPCC(I) president. He did not do anything in the organisation. He only instigated and helped the dissidents. I offered him a ministership of state only in deference to his age and the fact that he is the MPCC(I) president. Had I gone strictly by capability I should have offered him only a deputy ministership.

Q. *What is your equation with the Maharashtra trinity: Antulay, Chavan and Vasantdada?*

A. I was never friendly wit Chavan or Dada. I come fro Chavan's district and we three belon to the same caste. Still, Chavan an Dada never let me grow in politics. Bu Antulay and I were friends. It is h who helped me get tickets in 1978 an 1980. It is because of him that I be came a cabinet minister. But our na tures were altogether different...

Q. *In what way?*

A. Unlike him, I never considere the party or the Government to be m personal property. I always held tha the party was a trust, and we are all i trustees.

Q. *What is the actual strength dissidents?*

A. 32. No more than that. Reme mber, only 32 people cross-voted dur ing the MLC elections in June.

Q. *Do you recognise that the* CL *over which you preside had its member hand-picked by Antulay? Aren't you dis gusted?*

A. It is true that mos Congress(I) MLA's were hand picked by Antulay. But I am not disgusted. It doesn't matter as long as there is a commo thread binding all of them to gether. And that common th read should be an unflinchin and unshakeable loyalty t Indiraji and Rajivji.

Q. *Is it there?*

A. Being chief minister I don want to call anyone disloyal. Bu when the party is busy campaign ing in other states, the dissident should behave. They are blackmailing the party. Actually some of these people have entered public life by fluke, by accident or by sheer luck. They have loyalty to themselves first, and the leaders come last of all.

Q. *How long do you hope to remain in power?*

A. At least till June 1985.

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friends and family members. He treats Government as his family affair."

Both Jichkar and Thokal are mild-mannered, choosing to cut low profiles in ongoing slanging match between their ron and his detractors. But Deshmukh ries a chip on his shoulder and has a orious temper which he often betrays. ring last fortnight's fracas at the CLP eting, he said. "However much you y try, you dissidents will not be able to ry even a street dog with you."

The chief minister believes that dissidence in Maharashtra is entirely a product of "hurt self-interest" and "there are no ideological or political differences involved" (*see interview*). This undoubtedly betrays a narrow understanding of the local situation, and lends substance to the dissidents' charge that the chief minister is "hardly a political animal". Says Prataprao Bhosale: "I came along with Yeshwantrao only last year and met Antulay only once, on the day when he lost chief ministership. Does the chief minister imply that I have taken liquor licences or any other favour from Antulay? If so, ask him or his minions to prove it."

However, Bhosale can reasonably apply his "hurt self-interest" theory in the distribution of licences for the state's mushrooming 'beer bars', attached to many eating houses, and the so-called 'permit rooms' where one is supposed to down a peg on producing a permit (nobody shows a permit, though). The beer bars and permit rooms come under no licensing restriction and the licences are

A.R. ANTULAY

Unabashed

THE FORMER chief minister of Maharashtra, Abdul Rehman Antulay, insists on living on Marine Drive which, he says with a mischievous smile, is "very close to the Mantralaya", the secretariat which is the seat of power. Just out of power, he had moved out to a small flat on Marine Drive. Now he occupies a "friend's flat" at Al-Sabah Court, a sprawling mansion facing the sea. Away from the hurly-burly of the Nagpur session of the state Assembly, and taking things easy, he spoke for two hours to INDIA TODAY *Correspondent* SUMIT MITRA. *Excerpts:*

Q. ***Why didn't you attend the session?***

A. If I go to attend then MLA's naturally meet me... without any effort on my part. I cannot forget I enjoyed their affection to the extent very few CLP leaders ever did. It is their greatness. I only meet those who come to meet me here. And, there are many of them.

Q. ***Why don't you make any extra effort to meet them?***

A. Because my hand is seen behind any activity of theirs—more in bad sense than good. If there is cross-voting, then it must be due to me. If somebody has used harsh language, then Antulay must have brainwashed them. If there is dissidence, then it must be Antulay. And all these things happen even when I don't meet the MLA's. What would have happened if I actually did?

Q. ***But you did invite some of them on the eve of the Nagpur session.***

A. Yes, I did. On the eve of the session I invited some of them, for the first time in the past 11 months. To all those who came, I requested with folded hands not to function in a manner that will embarrass my leader....

Q. ***Who is your leader?***

A. When I say my "leader", I mean none other than Mrs Gandhi.

Q. ***Do you still have confidence in the high command? If so, is your confidence reciprocated?***

A. I am in the party by my own volition and choice. To me, loyalty and friendship are not commercial propositions nor a barter arrangement. I honestly believe that Mrs Gandhi is a cohesive factor in the fabric of Indian nationhood. Patriotic instincts are always a one-way traffic and never warrant any reciprocation.

I cannot absolve myself of the responsibility of suggesting his (Bhosale's) name. It was a sin... The entire trouble could have been avoided had I decided not to recommend his name...

Q. ***Do you think that the high command holds you responsible for dissidence in Maharashtra?***

A. No. Read the newspapers and you'll find who holds me responsible.

Q. ***The chief minister thinks you were using the party as your personal property.***

A. You want me to answer the points of criticism made by Bhosale in his interview with you. I don't think you take him seriously. Do you? Next question, please.

Q. ***Bhosale says you were taking interest in MLA's personal matters...***

A. It is below my dignity to reply to this insulting description of the great party called the Maharashtra Congress(I) Legislature Party.

Q. ***What is the future outlook for Maharashtra?***

A. I think the high command is seized of the problem and they, in their wisdom, will find the correct answer. So far as I am concerned, only a few days before I relinquished office, the party was unanimous. After I tendered resignation, they wanted to re-elect me with equal unanimity. In my humble opinion, I don't think any major detrimental development has happened since then to change the situation.

Q. ***If Bhosale is such a big flop why did you recommend his name in the first place?***

A. To be very honest, I cannot absolve myself of the responsibility of suggesting his names. It was a sin.

Q. ***How would you atone for it?***

A. I have publicly apologised for having committed the sin for which I have asked everybody's pardon. After all, one learns by experience. Indeed, let me be honest in admitting that the entire trouble that my leader has been facing could have been avoided had I decided not to recommend his name to the high command.

Q. ***What are your future plans? Have you been offered the general secretaryship of the AICC?***

A. It is always in keeping with the dignity of an individual that not he but those who offer should so declare.

Q. ***Bhosale hopes to be in power till 1985. Any comment?***

A. The high command of the Congress(I) is not in the habit of whispering things into the ears of chief ministers.

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issued freely even now. Between June 1981 and January 1982, when Antulay was the chief minister, says a report of the department of prohibition, 298 'permit room' licences and 202 'beer bar' licences were issued in Maharashtra, and 92 MLA's "took interest" in 243 cases. The Bhosale camp paints it as "indirect favour". In fact, O.P. Behal, a known dissident MLA, who owns Bombay's Khyber Restaurant, is the president of the state's Wine Merchants' Association.

"Undesirable" Influence: The supporters of the chief minister, however, often congratulate themselves for having curbed the "undeserved and undesirable" influence that some MLA's exercised during Antulay's regime. They say MLA's often interfered with transfer or promotion of police officers, thus carving out their own zones of influence among gangland bosses. The home department, unable to hold out against political pressure, tagged such cases as "government-desired transfer/promotion". According to Jichkar, there were "over 800" government-desired changes in the police administration in 1981 "but none in 1982".

Another area where some MLA's could successfully pressurise the administration was in the staying of externment orders against undesirable elements. In crime-prone Bombay, the police often have to bar the entry of certain individuals into certain pockets or districts. In 1981, over 300 such orders were stayed under political pressure in Bombay alone. This year, there was only one such case, says Jichkar, and that too on humane consideration.

Under Antulay, the Cabinet sub-committee on Urban Land Ceiling Act, the crucial body which issues no-objection certificates for building on private land in excess of a specified ceiling, met only five times and cleared only six cases. This was often cited as the indirect cause for spiralling of property prices in Bombay between June 1980 and January 1982. However, under Bhosale, the sub-committee has met every week since June 2, 1982, has overhauled the entire distribution policy of surplus urban land and has cleared over 200 cases under various sections of the Act. Said an official in the housing department: "The big builders are now unhappy. If there is a surplus of land in the market, they cannot make investors speculate. And that is one reason why flat prices are hurtling down, not only in Bombay but also in all the eight other urban agglomerations of the state."

Bhosale's supporters say that "some MLA's" during the earlier regime had "a finger in every pie"—starting from no-objection certificate under Urban Land Ceiling Act to de-requisitioning of government houses, beer bar and permit room licences, staying of externment orders and transfer of police officers. "They were functioning as a government within the Government. Bhosale may not be politically sharp, but he is above board. He has stopped all this without thinking of his personal popularity. Hence, these attacks on him." They cite the most recent case: the eviction order served on Bhaurao Patil from the 6,000 sq ft government flat issued to him by Antulay at Sarang, a high-rise building right across from the Mantralaya. "Do you expect Bhaurao not to be angry with the chief minister after this?" asks a Bhosale supporter.

Last fortnight, with the curtain almost ringing down on his short-lived rule, Bhosale was busy taking a crash course in PR. Taking a week-end off from tension-torn Nagpur, he flew in the silver-grey government helicopter to Akola

Sathe: compromise candidate?

and Amravati. He had dinner at the house of Ushatai Chowdhury, MP from Amravati; breakfast at the house of Yeshwant Sherekar, deputy minister for cooperation and MLA from Chander Bazar in Amravati; and lunch at the house of Ram Meghe, also an MLA. Present in tow were other MLA's and office-bearers of the local Congress(I) units. Cooperative members and businessmen, nevertheless, streamed into the circuit house to meet him, like ants seeking out crystals of sugar. But even his closest allies seemed reconciled to the fact of his standing on the firing line.

After Bhosale, who? A section of the MPCC(I) has strongly recommended a spell of the President's Rule in the state, to be followed by elections in the winter of 1983. But, if Mrs Gandhi chooses to try out a third chief minister in two years for the crucial state of Maharashtra, accounting for 18 per cent of the country's invested capital in the factory sector, and 17.5 per cent of industrial employment, she can do so by following guidelines. While appointing Bhosa only guideline was to find a man w not deserted her at any stage. B simple formula of "100 per cent l did not work. Says Balasaheb "There are four alternatives for th command. First, it can lay dow principle, just as it did in Bhosale Second, it can assemble the recogni leaders of Maharashtra Congress(ask them to hammer out a con Third, it can rely entirely on the M elect their leader. Lastly, Mrs Gand select a chief minister all by herself.

The recognised leaders are only Yeshwantrao Chavan, Vasantrao Patil and Antulay. Despite their pro aloofness to the current goings-on, supporters have united on the anti-Bhosale platform. But their tional rivalry is so bitter that the never reach a consensus. Amon MLA's, Antulay has a clear majorit they are mostly non-Marathas who the Chavan-Patil "clique" with con They will only elect a person Antulay considers safe. Such a man not be "safe" for the high com whose attitude to Antulay has st over the past one year.

Mrs Gandhi can still stave crisis by despatching Vasant S Union minister for chemicals an lisers, and a prominent Vidarbha Br (hence, non-Maratha) leader, to B as chief minister. She can even cata non-controversial Maratha leader, s Pratibha Patil, the minister for development, to chief ministership. B the long run, these are patch remedies. The driving force for lead change in Maharashtra emanates not the lack of personal popularity of the minister, but from the restiveness the legislature party, the wild bun young, untried people who pitchforked into the Assembly by A and the late Sanjay Gandhi in 1980. S senior bureaucrat in the state secre "The MLA's have tasted blood know that they can call all the shots state. They will not relent unless the thrown out and Mrs Gandhi calls elections."

Will she? Won't she? The Janu polls will prove once again the reser her popularity in the Deccan platea she wins handsomely in Karnataka Andhra Pradesh, she can make bold to a new chapter in Maharashtra and call fresh mandate. If she doesn't, she pl game whose rules are framed by supporters of Abdul Rehman Antula

—SUMIT MITRA in

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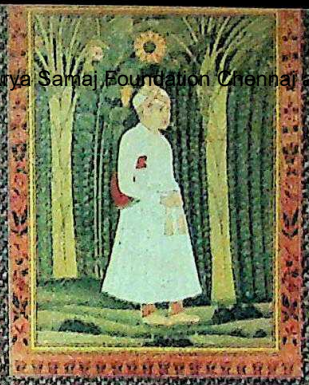

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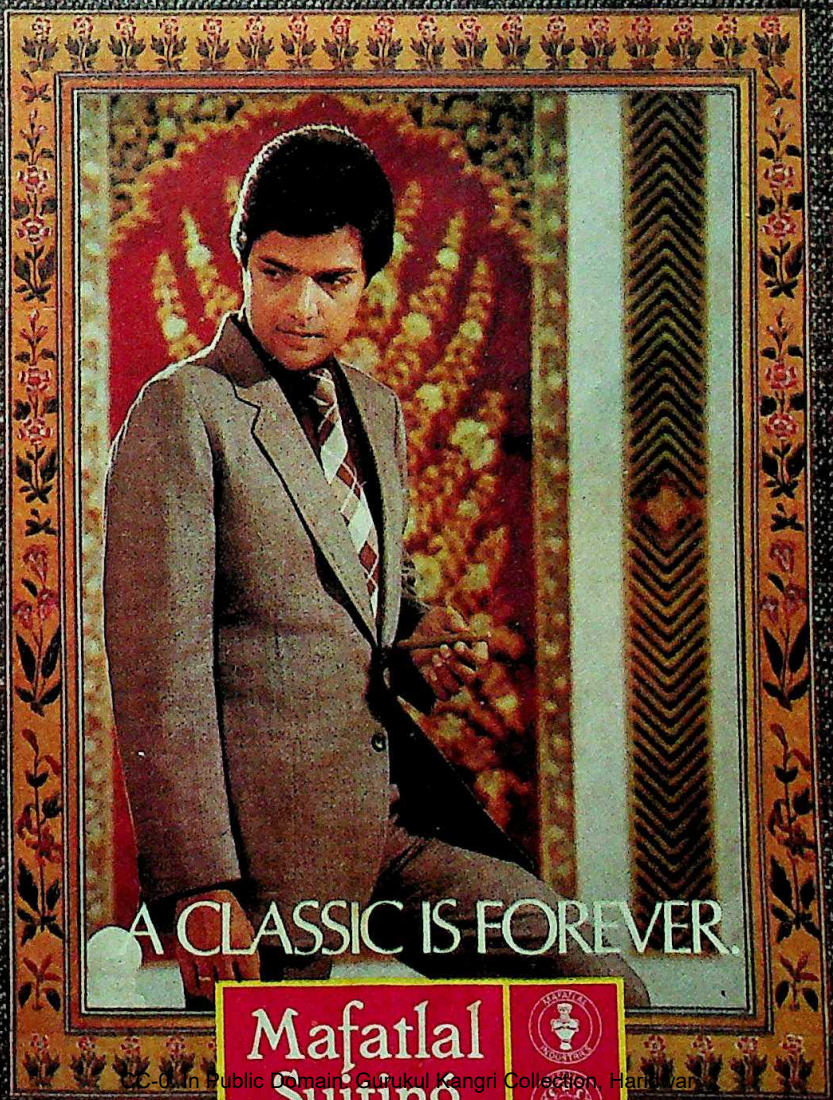

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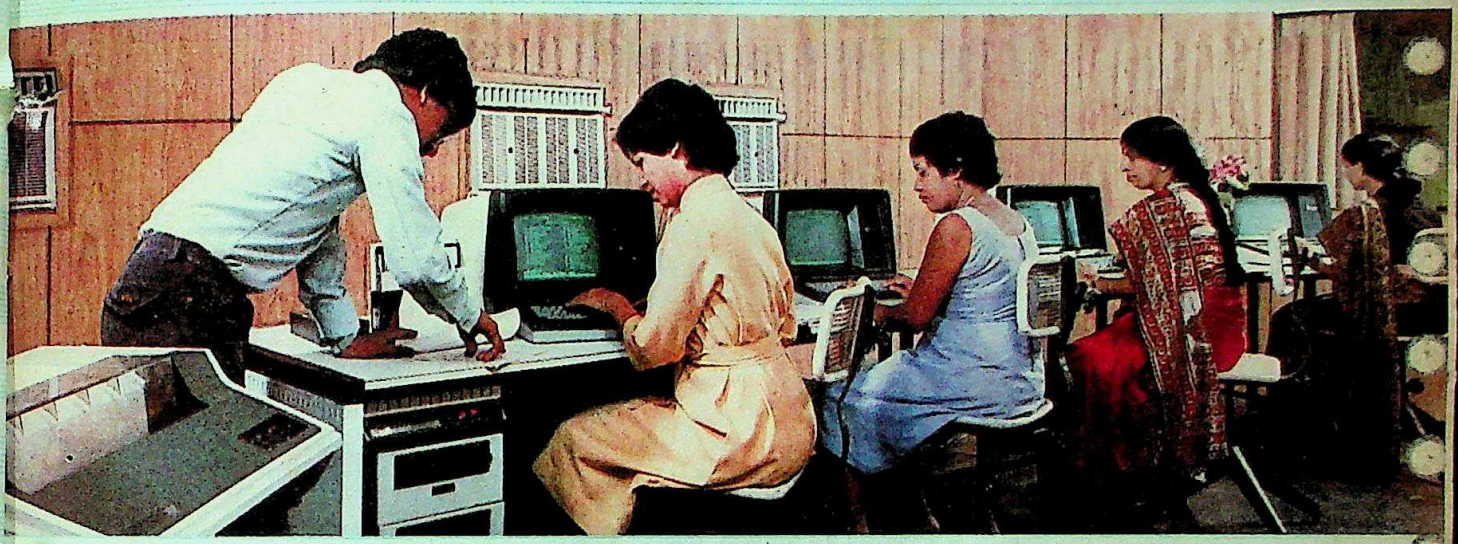

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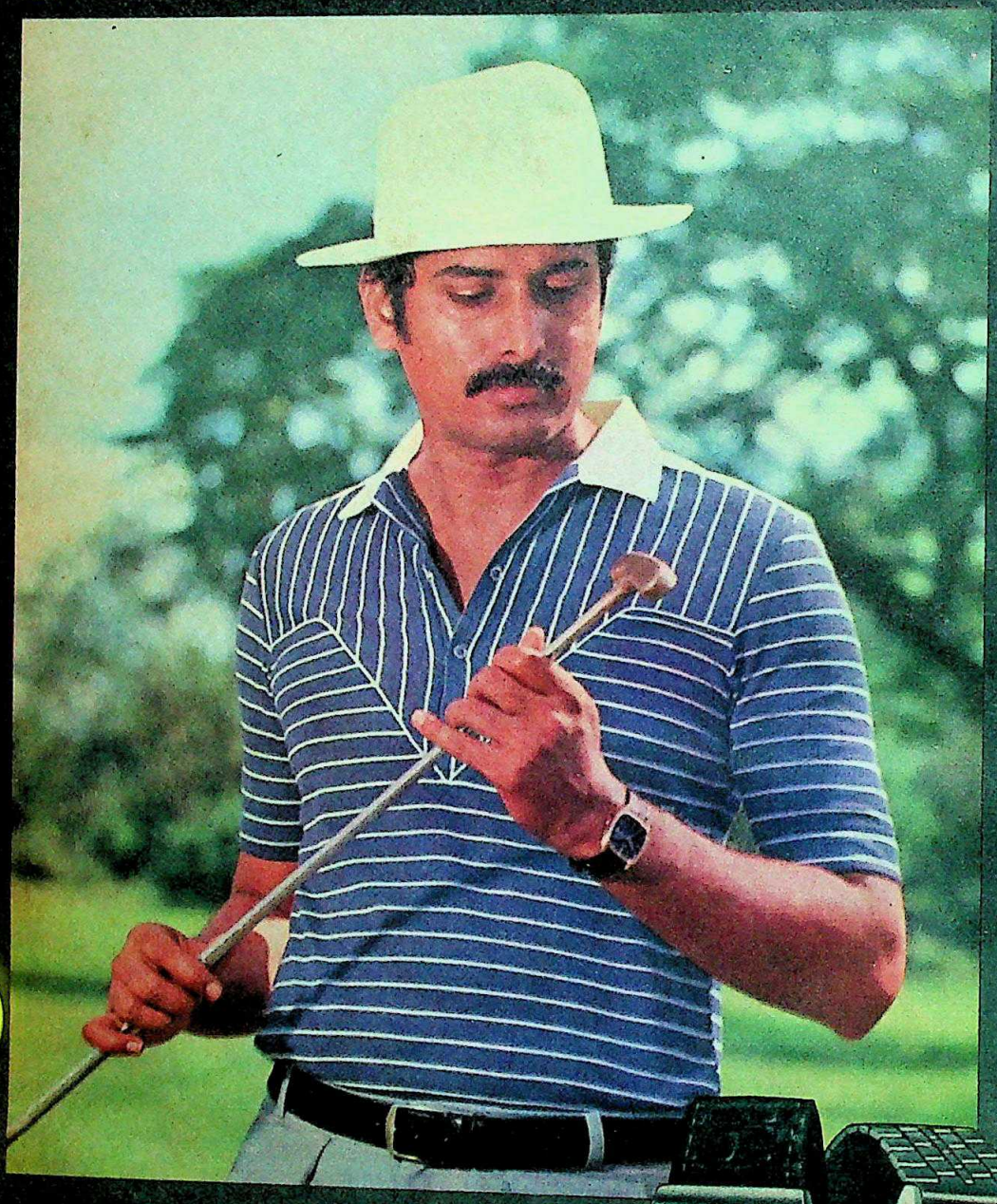

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KA GANDHI

he Untold Story

ID MANEKA Gandhi remark· after her husband, the late Sanjay Gandhi, had been sent to prison: e is so much peace with this bastard ail"? Did she and her mother, shwar Anand, perform a *tantrik ha*- to hasten Rajiv Gandhi's end? Is ka in possession of fabulous riches re unaccountable? Was she shielding e cousin who might have had a role y in the mysterious death of her in 1977? Did she ill-treat Sanjay, g him to bouts of depression and a sport like aerobatics? Was she a -smoker despite being a Sikhni, a which Sanjay resented? Did she in- in wanton revelry after his death, ing lavish parties and going in fancy ? Do charges of adultery haunt her er?

All this, and much more, occur in a that never was—and thereby hangs a Had Rashtrapati Bhavan officials not ed at the last moment, the 50-page -cover monstrosity priced at Rs 50, d by a "pictorial journalist" called Ali qui, and titled "Son of India", would bee formally released at a function on December 14, Sanjay's birthday, one less than Giani Zail Singh, the dent of India. The allegations against eka and Amteshwar are all contained 10,000-word article called "A Tale of Brothers", authored by Mohammed s, the loud-mouthed special envoy to rime minister during the Emergency, man of the Trade Fair Authority, a loyalist who is regarded as a i household fixture.

hough the release of the book by resident was stalled the damage was

Maneka (left) and Amteshwar: reviled

already done. The first instalment of Yunus' article had appeared in that morning's edition of *National Herald*, the newspaper of which Mrs Gandhi is herself a trustee. Next morning, *National Herald* carried the concluding part of the article, and Hari Jai Singh, its editor, remarked: "We are only printing somebody else's article."

Dashed Hopes: Yunus insisted that the book's release had been "held up" because of "many glaring proofing errors" in its pages, and maintained that "the President never refused to release it". On December 16, he was hopeful that the book would be formally published "in a couple of days". It wasn't, at least till the end of the fortnight. But stacks of the book, lying right behind the President at the morning's function, soon found their way into the hands of "friends" and assorted guests, including some of the newsmen.

Yunus was unperturbed about the potentially libellous nature of the charges traded by him against Maneka and Amteshwar. "Let them sue me," he blustered, "and I am going to pull all the skeletons out of their cupboard. I have got documentary evidence against them. But knowing the family as I do, they will never pick up the courage to go to court."

The impact of Yunus' vitriolic outpouring was further heightened by the VIP turnout at the morning's function. Besides Mrs Gandhi, who was the chief guest, the other dignitaries included, apart from the US, British, Chinese, French and Kuwaiti ambassadors, heavy-weight ministers such as A.P. Sharma, Veerendra Patil and P.C. Sethi, powerful MP Arun Nehru, Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra, Rajiv Gandhi, Delhi Lt-Governor Jagmohan and wrestler Dara Singh.

Said Akbar Ahmed, convenor of Maneka Gandhi's Sanjay Vichar Manch: "This is a conspiracy. The function was arranged for the release of the book. The prime minister has lowered the dignity of her office by not having publicly condemned Yunus. She should at least dissociate herself from *National Herald*."

Smear Campaign: Yunus's article, though it purported to be about the two brothers, Rajiv and Sanjay, is in reality a no holds barred smear campaign against two women—Maneka and Amteshwar. Without caring to substantiate any of his charges, and disregarding every law of libel, Yunus has gone to the extent of holding the two women virtually responsible for the death of their husbands. In a trenchant attack on Yunus, Khushwant Singh, editor of *The Hindustan Times*, wrote: "It was the oddest way of paying tribute to a departed

Mrs Gandhi at Sanjay's birth anniversary function: an occasion marred

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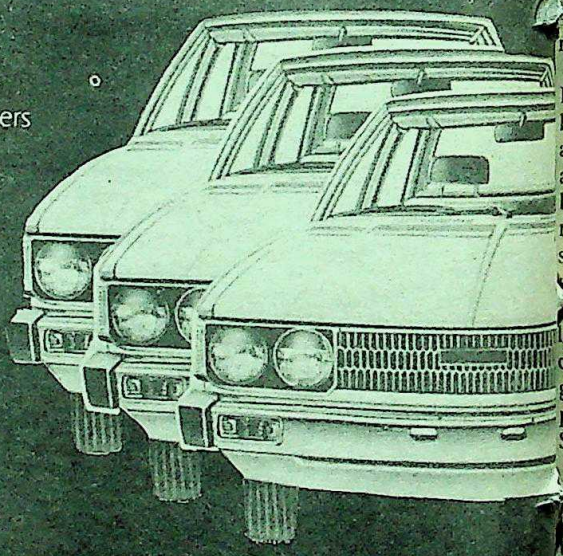

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...he (Yunus) owed his nomination foreign service to Pandit Nehru; it Pandit Nehru's paper that he chose to n a member of the Nehru family."

The article by Yunus is the part of an ng slanging match in print, now ragetween the loyalist camps of Maneka Rajiv. The ball was set rolling by a let devoid of any print-line doing the is among all MP's since last October. Reading at places like unalloyed pornography, it relates some lurid descriptions of Maneka's and Amteshwar's private lives. Yunus himself has written in his article: "A set of her (Amteshwar's) nude pictures are making the rounds of the capital."

The article was the first public onslaught of its kind mounted by people claiming allegiance to the Rajiv camp. Amteshwar, however, kept her cool, showing no intention of going to the court. When approached by INDIA TODAY, one of her aides merely said: "Madam has just come back from the hospital where her son, Viren, is recovering from a road injury. She can't talk to the press." Within days, however, photocopies of a series of letters exchanged between Mrs Gandhi and her children during 1964–74 began to appear in various circles of New Delhi.

SANJAY VICHAR MANCH

Into The Enemy Camp

WITH the heat being turned on in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the last thing the Congress (I) needed was a belligerent attack in Uttar Pradesh, their political backyard and that too by a member of India's ruling family. And Maneka Gandhi's sweep through the state last fortnight seems to prove that her policy of taking the battle into the enemy camp is starting to show dividends. This time round the cheers were louder, the wall posters more colourful, and more important, the crowds more responsive.

Visiting Amethi, her brother-in-law Rajiv's constituency, on the occasion of her late husband Sanjay's 36th birth anniversary, she said to the crowds: "I am here in Amethi to celebrate my husband's birthday because this is as much my home as it was his." Her next sentence was drowned in the deafening applause of a 40,000-strong audience. In the rest of her 20-minute speech, the longest one she has made, she lashed out at both the Central and state governments for their misplaced priorities and their failure to implement Sanjay's 5-point programme.

Focussing on what she termed "anti-welfare" policies of the Government, Maneka drew attention to the Rs 1,000 crore expense incurred by the Asian Games. Saying that this money was spent in preference to developmental projects, she asked: "Does this seem reasonable in a country like India?" The sound of a thousand "no's" rang out in answer.

Not one to beat about the bush, Maneka went on to hit out at Rajiv Gandhi, saying: "I have learnt that Rajivji might change his mind about Amethi and contest the next election from Phoolpur, a sure sign that he's afraid to match me here for it's possible it might upset his chances of winning—the little that there is." Referring to the rumour making the rounds in Amethi that the Congress (I) may bring in superstar Amitabh Bachchan to combat the Maneka factor, she scoffed: "This showbiz will get none of them anywhere as it's all political hamming."

S PRASAD

Maneka Gandhi in Amethi: getting a response

Aggressive Tone: With her eye on the election she hopes to fight in Amethi, she cautioned the crowd: "Democracy in this country is greatly endangered by authoritarian forces raking in power on all pretexts but let's make a pact today that we will fight back and fight the best we can with whatever resources are available." This was more or less her line all through her two-day tour and the encouraging thing this time was the crowds had come to hear what she had to say, not merely to see her which as Maneka said "made all the difference". She and her companions, co-founder of the Sanjay Vichar Manch Akbar Ahmed and General Secretary Kalpanath Sonkar, were stopped at various places and Maneka was handed appeals and applications by as many as 96 people.

Maneka's euphoria at the end of the tour has sent distress signals to the Congress(I) leadership. The earlier calculation that the prime minister's recalcitrant daughter-in-law held only curiosity value for the electorate had obviously gone awry and this coupled with the information ferreted out by intelligence sources that more people had waited for longer hours this time, and that too quite happily, to hear Maneka speak did nothing to restore their composure.

Proclaimed Ahmed aggressively: "We are slowly stepping into the political forefront and the Manch has become a rational alternative." Even if this is still hyperbole, in Uttar Pradesh at least, when Mrs Gandhi is mentioned, people are likely to ask: "which one?"

—ANAND SAGAR

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The letters made the points that:

► it was Rajiv rather than Sanjay who caused worries to his mother because of his propensity "to get influenced easily by other people";

► Rajiv too was involved in Sanjay's controversial Maruti project;

► some of the relatives of Rajiv's wife, Sonia, were looking around for business opportunities in India; and.

► Rajiv's landlady in England wanted to throw him out because he did not pay rent; it is Sanjay who lent him cash and baled him out.

The persons dishing out the letters invariably reminded their takers that this was "only the first instalment" a there were "many more rounds to f The most significant aspect of the the printed words was the unwilling either party to go to court. A two camps exchanged stones, the houses threatened to get shatte pieces.

—SUMI

MATRIMONY

Ladykiller

MARRIAGES may be "made in heaven" for some, but certainly not for Prem Nath Kashyap, who seems to have made a profession of getting married. "Dr" Kashyap, also known as Prem, Frank Phillip and Lala, has seven marriages, and over 36 engagements to his credit, apart from three separate prison sentences. Last fortnight, his matrimonial career was disrupted for the fourth time when he was arrested on the charge of duping a woman of Rs 20,000 on the pretext of marrying her. With his arrest, the police recovered several papers, letters and photographs which bear witness to his various matrimonial alliances, through which he is believed to have made over Rs 3 lakh.

Kashyap's matrimonial history goes back to nearly 20 years ago, when he convinced the big industrial house for which he worked to send him to Canada—ostensibly for higher education. From there, he moved on to the United States and in 1964 got married to Luci, an American girl. The girl discovered that he already had a wife, Indu Bala, in India and complained to the U.S. Emigration Office and Kashyap was deported back to India. Not wanting to stay in India, he soon crossed over to Nepal where he married Madhu Rani, an unsuspecting Nepali girl working at the Nepal Mission Hospital.

Although the police have no record of his stay there, he is believed to have associated with a Nepalese drug running syndicate that peddled hashish between Kathmandu and Toronto, Canada. On one of his trips as a carrier for the drug syndicate in 1968, he was nabbed with a consignment of hashish at Toronto airport. The next three years were spent in a Canadian prison. It was during this period that he came up with the idea of duping women through wedlock.

Matrimonial Alliances: According to Dr K.K. Paul, deputy commissioner of police (central district), Delhi, while Kashyap was in jail, his brother in India used to send him gifts wrapped in newspapers. A matrimonial advertisement in one such newspaper gave him the idea of cheating women who wanted to get married. He wrote from prison to prospective wives, telling them that he was a well-to-do man who had been falsely implicated in an economic offence, and that he would soon be returning to India at which time he hoped to get married. The trick worked and he soon started receiving letters and gifts from various eligible women. But in 1973, soon after his arrival in Bombay, Kashyap found himself behind bars again—this time he was sentenced to two years imprisonment for travelling on a false passport.

After two years in Bombay Central Jail, Kashyap arrived in Delhi, where he started living with Raj, a divorcee. With Raj acting alternately his sister and his aunt, in two or th years, Kashyap managed five marria and numerous engagements.

In 1977 his luck ran out wh nurse whom he had duped took hi court. He was convicted on the char of rape, cheating and misrepresenti fact and sentenced to 10 years imp sonment. Undeterred by the stroke bad luck, he approached the Suprem Court which revised the earlier judg ment, reducing the 10-year sentence seven years. But in 1981, after servi four years in Tihar Jail, Kashyap w released on good conduc While still in Tihar, Kas yap continued respondi to matrimonial advertis ments and when he got o he married a young la doctor with whom he living when he was ar on December 19.

While living with h sixth wife in her Ka Bagh house in New Del Kashyap is believed have married a seven woman in Chandigarh November 22. Althou pictures indicate a mar age, Kashyap insists th this was only an engag ment. This latest victim a Sikh girl from Lond who flew to India in t midst of her divorce pr ceedings, and marri Kashyap. Totally unaware of his du ious past, the girl did exactly a wanted and promised to send hi £1,000 and an air ticket as soon as s returned to London.

Though Kashyap is now in ja facing cheating charges, he seems qui unperturbed. Said Paul: "There is r ally no way we can stop him if decides to continue what he has bee up to, except to make the public wa of his criminal activities." And Kashyap's past matrimonial career any indicator, he is bound to be at again.

—ASOKA RAI

Kashyap with his latest victim: professional husband

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MIL NADU

Backwards into Battle

TAMIL NADU Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran has a flair for the flamboyant political gesture. But this time he has stirred a hornet's nest by announcing that the state vernment is considering a proposal to end the concessions given to backward l scheduled castes to all poor people spective of their caste.

Anywhere in the country such a move ld have caused a rumpus. In Tamil du, where the Dravida Kazhagam (DK) vement with its strong anti-Brahmin nings is very powerful, the move is povely daring. Both the opposition Dravida nnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and MGR's n All India Anna Dravida Munnetra zhagam (AIADMK) are offspring of the ionalist DK movement. And Tamil Nadu s always led the country in the matter of ervations—there is a 50 per cent reivatio in educational institutions and for te government jobs. The state also has a ggering 174 castes which are listed as ckward.

Instant Opposition: MGR's proposals re instantly denounced by both the DMK rty chief M. Karunanidhi and DK General cretary K. Veeramani. Said Karunanidhi: he Constitution recognises only social d educational backwardness." ramani, who heads the backward castes ment in the state says he will fight the e in court if necessary. He is equally hement about the proposals and adds: ngling out the poor of the forward comnities for favoured treatment is uncontutional, because it offends the principle of uality. The state Government can think up elio ative measures for the economically kker sections in general irrespective of the mmunity they belong to."

The chief minister does not, however, m to be in a mood to be cowed down by ch statements. He has stuck to his guns d insists that "all backwardness ultitely boils down to economic backwardss." He is said to be strongly of the view t all poor people should be eligible for the e concessions irrespective of their caste. pounding on the possible criteria which ld be used to define poverty, the chief nister recently suggested that everybody o is not eligible to pay income tax could be classed as poor.

SUBHA NEWS PHOTO SERVICE

MGR (top) and Veeramani: crossing swords

This suggestion met with an immediate retort from Veeramani, who said, "only 3 per cent of the population pays income tax so does MGR imply that 97 per cent of the populace is economically backward and therefore eligible for concessions?"

It is not certain whether it is by coincidence or not but the controversy has blasted to the surface just after the first ever National Conference of Backward Castes held in Madras on December 11 and 12. The largely attended and impressive meet demanded that the B.P. Mandal Commission Report of 1982 should be fully implemented. The conference also announced that it would be starting a five-week programme of rallies as a prelude to a "mighty national movement" to see that the Mandal Report is implemented. The major demand of the committee would not make much difference in Tamil Nadu as the state is already reserving more than the 27 per cent recommended by the Mandal Committee.

Previous Attempt: This is not the first time that the actor-turned-politician has tried to rake up the issue of reservations. In 1979 he had tried to specify an annual income ceiling of Rs 9,000 for members of the backward classes for them to be eligible for reservations. MGR was, however, forced to go back on the move in the wake of stiff opposition. In fact, he was forced to step down and in a bid to placate the backward classes he increased the reservation quota from 31 per cent to 50 per cent.

The questions of classification of backward classes and reservations have assumed added importance now in view of the Tamil Nadu Government's appointment of a backward classes commission to review the existing system of enumeration and listing in response to a Supreme Court directive. Some students have gone to court to challenge the state Government's 1980 order, listing 174 castes as backward. And since the backward castes constitute a large portion of the electorate it will be interesting to see if MGR backs down this time —S.H. VENKATRAMANI

DMK

Losing Ground

THESE are bad times for the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). Its crushing defeat at the Periakulam by-election in September is now being followed by a wave of defections to the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). While the DMK leadership is trying to make light of its losses there is no doubt that they are genuinely concerned by the latest trends.

The defections started nearly a month ago when 100 DMK workers in Madras moved out of the party *en masse*. They were welcomed by no less a person than Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) at a widely-publicised meeting in the city. The rumblings of discontent snowballed into a veritable exodus in the third week of December. Two important DMK leaders in Madras, Era Sambandam and Nanchil Manimaran, switched loyalties to the AIADMK on December 16. A number of party members and workers followed suit in Madurai led by a former mayor, M.R. Shankaran.

Seethapathy: switching sides

Major Blow: While Shankaran and his cohorts were switching sides in Madurai, the DMK suffered another major set-back when former Madras secretary R.D. Seethapathy also quit the party in Madras. Seethapathy threw a fright into the DMK later by announcing that he had with him the resignations of more partymen who were disgruntled with

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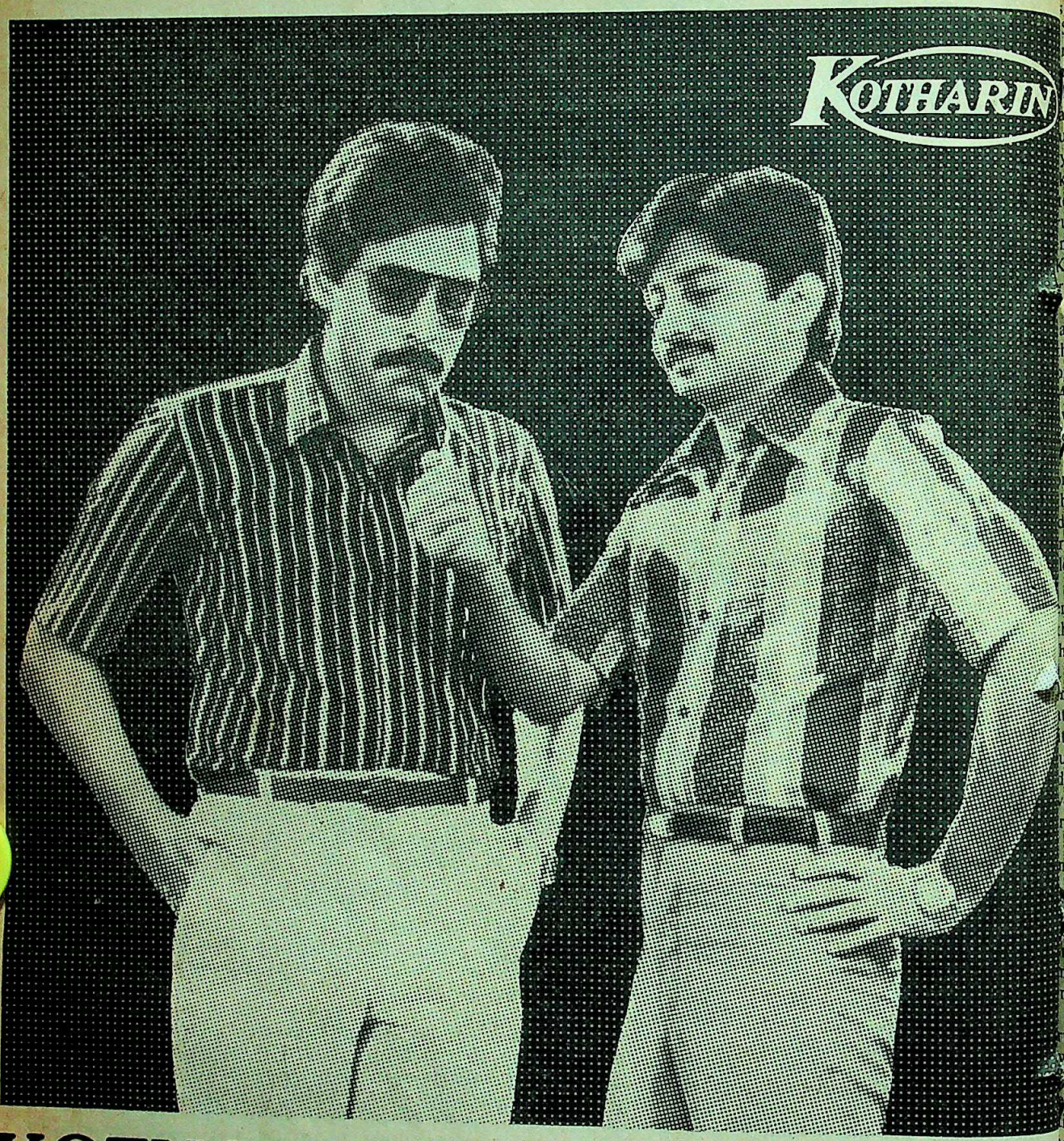

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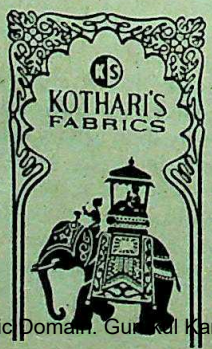

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chief M. Karunanidhi's autocratic

Seethapathy is said to have been pushed revolt after he lost in the DMK's organi- nal elections: he had stood for the post adras district secretary but he was ted by T.R. Balu, a close confidant of unanidhi. There are strong suspicions in circles that Karunanidhi himself had ed for Seethapathy's defeat and con- ed a vilification campaign against him. unanidhi is said to have done this in an mpt to nurture the fortunes of his son, K. Stalin and his nephew Murasoli an, a Rajya Sabha MP.

Reports that large segments of the DMK alienated from the party leadership were her strengthened when MGR extended pen invitation to DMK General Secretary Anbazhagan to switch over to "the real vidian movement". Anbazhagan has, ever, been quick to repudiate allegations he had any intention of crossing the r. Despite such protests his counterpart he AIADMK, P.U. Shanmugam, has clai- that "the dictatorial attitude of unanidhi is about to trigger off a large- e exodus from the DMK".

Brave Face: Members of the DMK have n trying to shrug off the defections as hing worth worrying about. Says hman Khan, a DMK MLA: "It is a trickle worth bothering our heads about." Karunanidhi gives other reasons for the te of defections: "The elements which the party were unable to stomach the ults of the party elections." Karunanidhi s that the very fact that party elections e been held is proof of the democratic king of the DMK.

Karunanidhi's protestations notwith- ding, political observers in the state are ruling out the possibility of further tions. Among the possible defectors g mentioned are DMK Deputy General etary K. Manoharan, DMK executive mittee member Nellai Nedumaran and mer food minister G.R. Edmund.

Manoharan is said to be angling for the ty's nomination for the Rajya Sabha seat w held by Murasoli Maran whose term is ring soon. Nedumaran and Edmund, wise, are hoping to get the DMK's nomi- ion for the Tiruchendur assembly seat, dered vacant by the death of the sitting DMK MLA Kesava Aditan in a car acci- t recently. Karunanidhi is, however, d to be rather reluctant to nominate her of them.

But as the defections continue the DMK closer to getting back to power. And tever the DMK may do there is no doubt MGR is riding high and nothing is ng to stop him in the near future.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

AVIATION

Crashlanding

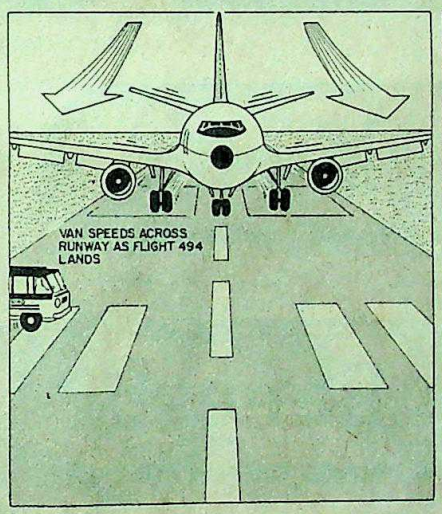
A HIT-AND-RUN accident with a difference, the near collision between Indian Airlines flight 499 and an International Airports Authority (IAAI) vehicle last fortnight has raised many questions in its wake. Cleared by the control tower to land on runway 28, the incoming flight from Bombay via Ahmedabad and Jodhpur with its load of 118 passengers touched down at approximately 2230 hours. Recapturing one brief tension-charged moment Flight Commander, Captain S.S. Paneesar said: "We sighted the van at right angles to the runway, fairly close to the centre, with its driving lights switched off. Only sheer presence of mind and a flick of the rudder averted disaster." He added: "Had we landed even 10 feet shorter than where we did, there was nothing I could have done."

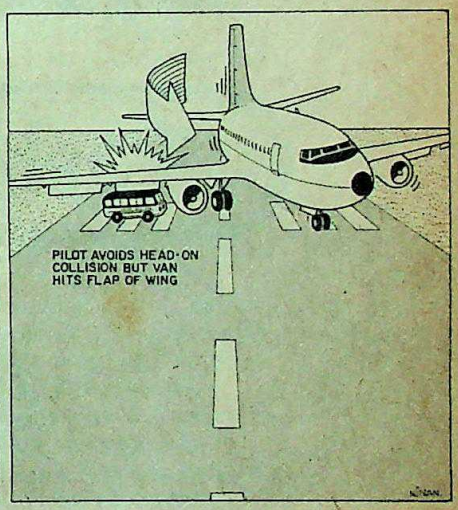
Narrowly missing a head-on collision the van, driven by airport security staffer Jai Singh, who had committed himself to racing across the approaching aircraft's path, was hit on its left side by the starboard wing flap and one of its windows was shattered. Not stopping to assess the damage he had caused, Singh raced down the runway, past the security gates, through the cargo complex, parked his vehicle at the Palam Police colony and absconded. Shortly afterwards, the unsuspecting passengers disembarked normally. He was only apprehended at 5 a.m. the following morning.

Quite clearly several cardinal rules had been infringed. Not only should the van, identified as an IAAI vehicle with Asiad markings, not have been near the bravo marker on runway 28 on the night of December 15, but a police security officer had no business to be driving it.

Further it was not clear how the vehicle had been admitted into the operational area through the security checkpoints without permission. While an aura of mystery continues to shroud the incident, the police insist that the van had the necessary permission and leave it at that. Said T.R. Kakkar, the chief of police at Palam Airport: "I would not like to comment anything at this stage when the enquiry is still on."

Enquiry Instituted: In a similarly non-committal vein, B.K. Bhasin, director flight safety, Indian Airlines, also said: "A high-powered committee has been set up to look into the incident. All systems have to be sorted out. The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is viewing it seriously. It would only be after the enquiry by the air safety committee is completed that we will have the whole picture and would be in a position to establish if the near fatal accident was due to individual failure or not."





Hardly the first incident of its kind, it was nevertheless the first time that a plane actually collided with a van. According to DGCA officials, vehicles have been known to cross the runway at all odd hours. But bureaucratic procrastination has so far impeded follow-up action on repeated official complaints to both the IAAI and the police commissions. While the accident has underscored the grave dangers involved and served to fuel renewed efforts, it will again take a few months before the deliberations of the high-level committee can be acted upon.

—ASOKA RAINA

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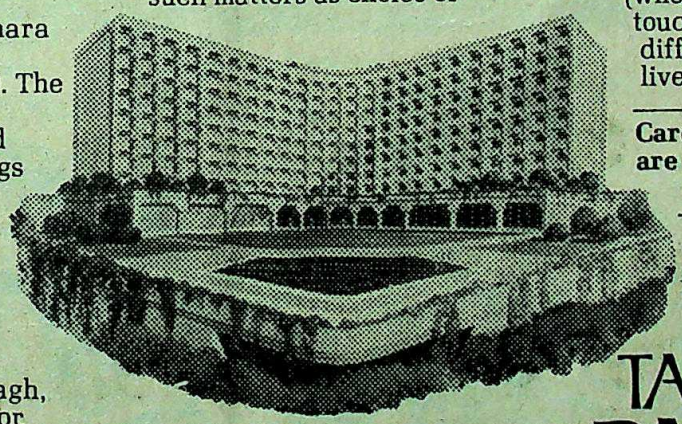

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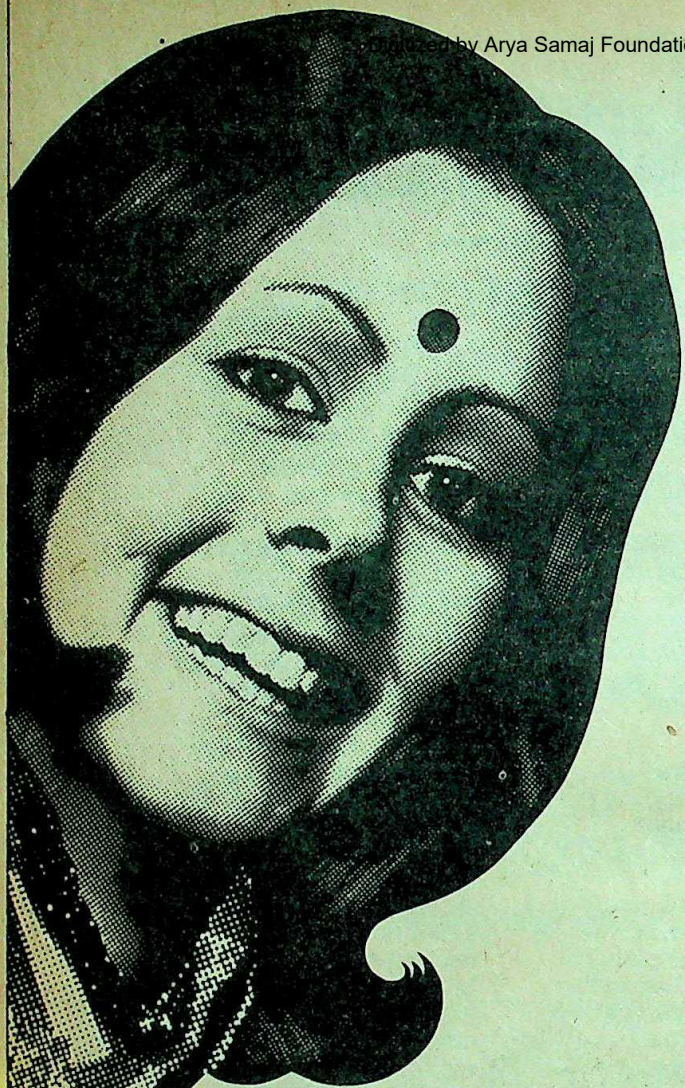

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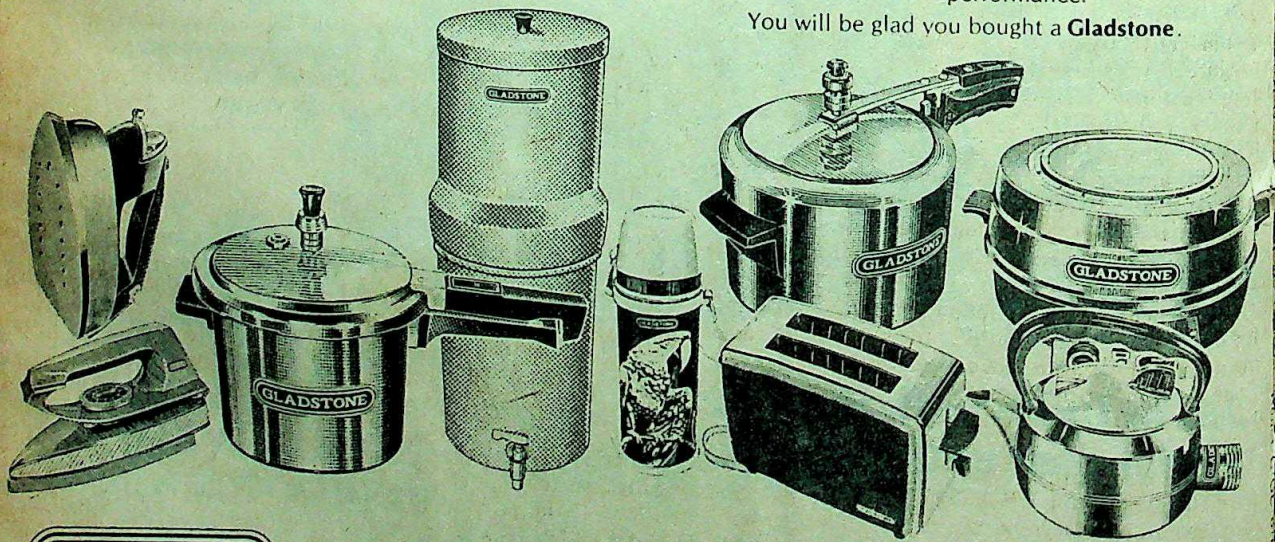

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HYA PRADESH

Dam Of Corruption

THE REPUTATION of Madhya Pradesh's Irrigation Department took another nosedive last month when the state Government suspended 24 engineers including two superintendent engineers—and ordered departmental inquiries against nine others. The unprecedented followed investigations into the working of the Rs 8.29-crore Jonk diversion scheme in Raipur district in south-east Madhya Pradesh, which revealed irregularities in excess of Rs 5 crore over the last several years.

Confessed the 35-year-old Digvijay Singh who took over the major and medium irrigation projects portfolio just three months ago: "The extent of irregularities are extremely high, especially considering the cost of the project. But I must admit that it is also illustrative of the corruption that has existed in this department."

The project on the river Jonk was started in 1973 as part of drought relief work and got administrative approval for Rs 4 crore in 1975. This was revised four years later to Rs 8.29 crore. The project consists of a 25-foot-high weir with a 64-km main canal and smaller distributaries, 90 km in length.

Long-standing Charges: Jonk has been a project regarded with suspicion for long. Even during the Janata regime, allegations of corruption were voiced in the Assembly by the then Congress(I) opposition. Nothing, however, came of the inquiry finally set up on June 29, 1979, under the chief technical examiner. Twenty-three months later similar proceedings were again instituted and he submitted his report on June 1981. In October, that year, following Chief Minister Arjun Singh's orders, the state's engineer-in-chief also looked into the case. The outcome of these two reports was that a number of irregularities came to light:

► the biggest irregularity related to workmen on the muster roll, which is normally instituted in drought years to provide immediate employment. As a rule work is otherwise done through contractors under departmental supervision. But between 1973–74 and 1978–79, Rs 3.46 crore were paid on the muster roll. At Rs 3.20 crore, the payment was particularly high in the period 1976–79. Interestingly, such payments were also shown during the rains—when work is simply not possible;

► Rs 182.60 lakh were paid through 422 vouchers by sub-engineers whereas normally the presence of the subdivisional officer is mandatory;

► 1,054 vouchers for payment of Rs 56.56 lakh were missing;

► for payments totalling Rs 2.56 lakh, the subdivisional officer's signatures were absent;

► in another case Rs 2.46 lakh had been paid but it was not possible to determine who had made the payment;

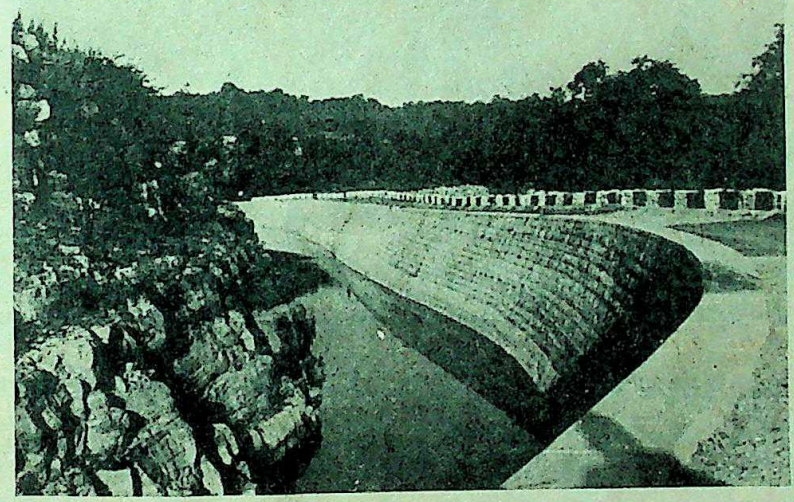
► in one instance, Rs 1.73 lakh had been paid but there was no work to show for them;

► payments were made for trucks taken on hire but there was neither any mention of the vehicles' registration numbers or their owners;

► countless payments were made without affixing revenue stamps when revenue stamps of more than Rs 75,000 should normally have been affixed;

► Rs 67,582 were paid at one time for cleaning a newly-constructed canal;

► in almost all years, the expenditure exceeded the budgetary provisions. In 1977–78, for example, Rs 238.97 lakh were spent as against a provision of Rs 195.02 lakh. Similarly, in 1980–81, the provision was for Rs 10 lakh but Rs 43.92 lakh were spent.



The Jonk diversion scheme: scandals galore

After a reply is received to the chargesheets issued, a district judge will inquire into the allegations. Acting on the basis of this report, the state Government has declared its intention to prosecute the culprits under the new Madhya Pradesh Specific Corrupt Practices Act (INDIA TODAY, October 15). If lack of supervision or recording of false or fictitious muster rolls is proved, the guilty officers could well end up with a three-year stint in jail.

Delayed Action: While the state Government's action was laudable, the expose sharply focused on the question of the interminable delay that preceded eventual action. In the Jonk case, for instance, the Government acted 14 months after the two reports had been submitted. On being contacted, Deputy Chief Minister Shivbhanu Solanki, who was irrigation minister until three months ago, had no explanation for the delay except that the framing of chargesheets was time-consuming. According to an official in the department, these delays were dangerous because they permitted guilty officials to strike underhand deals and further postpone action.

In a written reply to a question from Lok Dal legislator Rama Shankar Singh, Arjun Singh recently stated in the Assembly that in the past 30 months, the chief technical examiner had made 68 investigations into the working of the Irrigation Department alone. According to official sources, however, most of these reports were gathering dust.

In additional scandals relating to auditing, six-year-old irregularities were being detected. With a spokesman of the Irrigation Department pointing out that teams from the accountant-general's office had visited work sites twice a year, this meant that either the auditors were incompetent or that discrepancies were not checked.

The Jonk fiasco is significant in hinting at the exact magnitude of corruption in the construction business. Said Digvijay Singh: "Adequate checks currently exist but officers simply don't adhere to them, either due to laziness or simply carelessness. In Jonk, for example, daily records of work accomplishment have not been maintained; inspection notes of supervisory officers are missing for years altogether." Stiff governmental action is possibly the only way to get officials back on the track.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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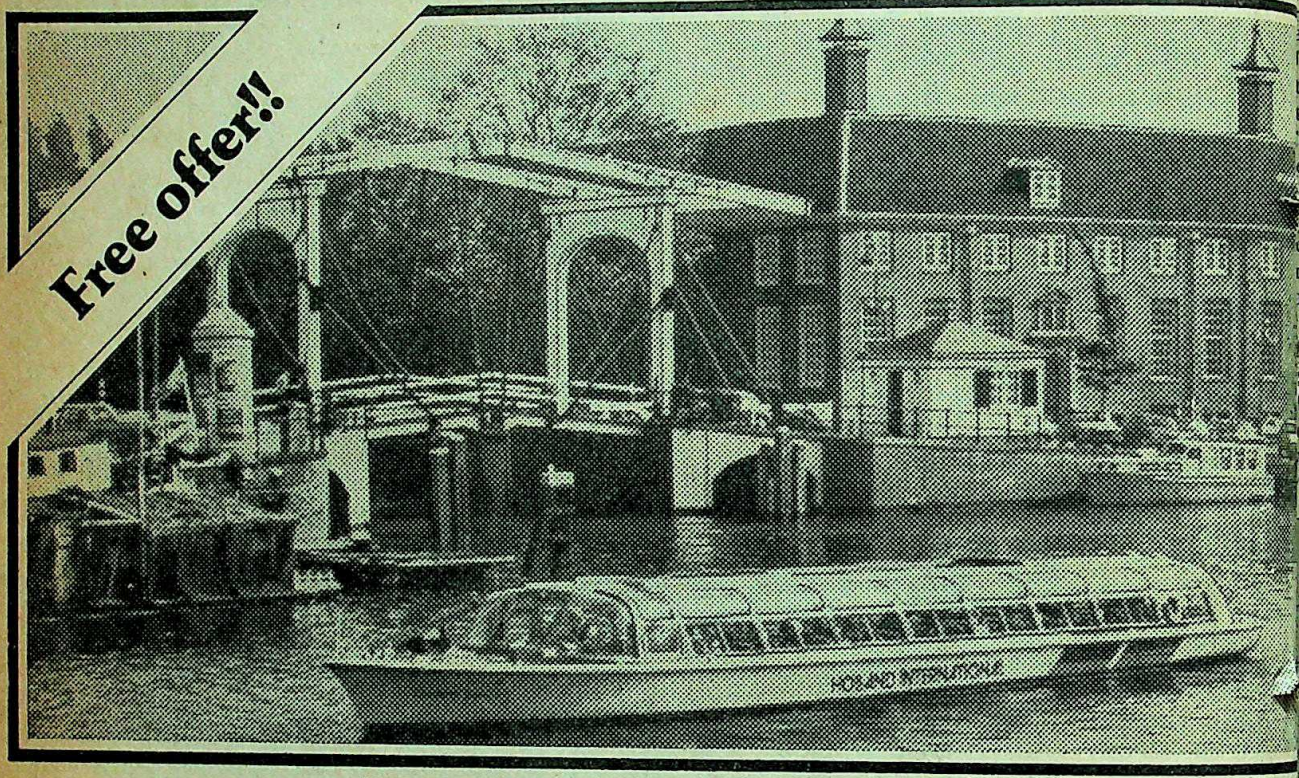

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REAUCRACY

The Powers That Be

ALL PRIVATE secretaries to Union ministers are equal, but S.R. Bhatia is more equal. Bhatia is the pri-ate secretary to Prakash Chand Sethi, the Union home minister, and currently he is the centre of a storm that is battering the doors of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and the Central Secretariat Service (CSS). Last fortnight, Bhatia's failure to secure a promotion re-sulted in an unprecedented confrontation between the Home Ministry and the UPSC, and held up the promotions of 140 CSS candidates.

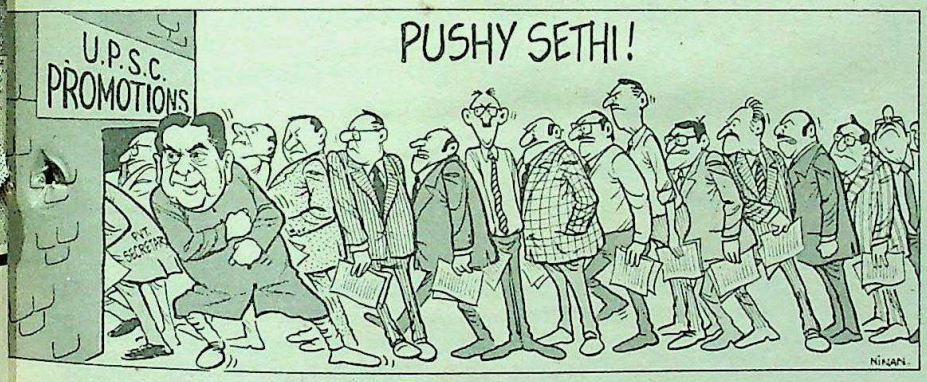
Bhatia is an old and faithful retainer of Sethi's; he has been with the jowly, Gadpan politician ever since he joined the Central Government as a minister of state in 1962. During Sethi's four-year stint be-tween 1972 and 1975 as chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Bhatia became a name to contend with in Bhopal. Since 1980, he has moved with Sethi through the minis-tries of petroleum, works and housing and always—and finally in September this year into the powerful home offices in North Block.

Working his way up from a stenographer's post, Bhatia has reached the CSS section officer-private secretary 'parent' grade (Rs 650–1,200), but since he is on deputation as the home minister's secretary, he draws by entitlement a de-puty secretary's salary in the grade Rs 1,500–2,000. Last month, Sethi, however, decided it was time Bhatia was formally promoted to the under secretary level in the grade Rs 1,200–1,600.

Promotions Committee: There lay the hitch. An under secretary appointment re-quires the approval of the UPSC, since it is a Class I post. Last month the UPSC con-stituted a promotions committee to finalise the annual list of elevations to Class I posts within the CSS.

Formed under the powers vested in the UPSC by Article 320(3)(b) of the Constitution, the four-member promotions committee met for three days from November 9 in order to draw up a 'pro-motions panel' of 140 names. The com-mittee was chaired by UPSC member Mrs R.D. Dhan; the other members were K.C. Sodhia, joint secretary, defence produc-tion, Lalkhama, joint secretary in the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission, and T. Ramaswamy, joint secretary, personnel planning in the Home Ministry.

The moment the committee was con-stituted, pressure began to emanate from the home minister's office. The message was clear—Bhatia would have to be pro-moted. But the committee came across a stumbling block: Bhatia's name was 374th on the seniority list, and in the normal course there was no way he could be pro-moted. The pressure built up when the UPSC was indirectly asked to ensure Bhatia's promotion by two other powerful persons.



Promotions are usually decided after intensive examination of the candidates' personal dossiers. The promotions com-mittee then categorises them as 'not fit', 'good', 'very good', or 'outstanding'. The outstanding candidates go to the top of the promotions list, but there are usually very few of them. The majority of can-didates fall in the 'very good' category, because a section officer logically enjoys long service and an efficient record.

Here, too, the committee could not make an exception for Bhatia. Since he had never worked in a section, and had always been a minister's secretary, there was no way he could be categorised as 'outstanding'. For all practical purposes, therefore, Bhatia had to be left out of this year's promotions list.

Averting Pressure: Late on No-vember 11, after the committee finalised the list, there arose another hurdle. Pro-motion lists are final only when the chairman of the UPSC affixes his signature. Normally, there is a 48-hour gap between the finalisation of the list and its approval by the chairman. This time, however, ap-prehending that the Bhatia case migh at-tract unnecessary pressure, the list was ty-ped out that evening, and Chairman, Dr M.L. Shahare, signed it that very night.

Sethi, apparently, took the news in his usual impassive way. Later, however, after discussions with Minister of State P. Venkatasubbiah, it was decided to send the list back to the UPSC for "reconside-ration". Last fortnight, the UPSC politely but firmly refused to reconsider the list—and the stalemate deepened. Worse still, all the 140 promotions have been fro-zen as a result of the imbroglio, thus af-fecting as many candidates and spreading ripples of disquiet in government offices.

The rules are quite inflexible on the subject. Item 8 in the Annexure to the UPSC (Exemption from Consultations) Regulations of 1958 sets out a lengthy procedure in case such a crisis arises. "The Government of India have decided," says the rule, "that where the Union Public Service Commission have been consulted in regard to any appointment(s), the re-commendations made by the Commission should not be departed from unless, in the opinion of the Honourable Minister con-cerned, exceptional circumstances exist which in the Public Interest require such departure. In such a case the reasons for holding this opinion should be communi-cated to the Commission, and the Commission given an opportunity of fur-ther justifying their recommendations. On the receipt of the observations of the Commission, their recommendations should be considered further by the Ministry concerned. If after further con-sideration, the Ministry shall consider that the recommendations made by the Commission should not be accepted, the case should be referred with a self-contained summary to the Establishment Officer of the Government of India, who will place it before the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, consisting of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Home Affairs, and the Minister administratively concerned with the appointment(s)."

Anticipating a situation like the pre-sent one, the rule goes on to say: "In cases in which the Home Minister or the Prime Minister happens to be the Minister concerned with the appointment(s) the Finance Minister will be added to the committee."

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Cabinet Sanction: The Bhatia case, therefore, can only be decided now by the Cabinet, and the rule stipulates that "The decisions reached by the Appointments Committee in all such cases should be communicated to the Commission by the Ministry administratively concerned. Final orders in accordance with the decision will also be issued by the Ministry, copies being endorsed to the Commission."

In theory an irregular appointment can be scrutinised by Parliament. Article 323(1) of the Constitution requires the UPSC to present an annual report of its work to the President, and the President is required to table it in both houses of Parliament, "together with a memorandum explaining, as respects the cases, if any, where the advice of the Commission was not accepted, (and) the reasons for such non-acceptance". But the UPSC 1982-83 report will not be tabled in Parliament until 1984—by then Bhatia's case might have set an unfortunate precedent.

Whatever the outcome, 140 government employees due for promotion have been subjected to unnecessary delays because of one dispute. Senior government officials are disturbed in principle over Sethi's unprecedented intervention in the UPSC's work. Employees' assciations are considering staging *dharnas* in protest against the freezing of the 140 promotions. Bhatia's case illustrates the preoccupations of the ministry at a time when the Punjab and Assam situations and the Baroda violence, among other problems, require its undivided attention.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

KERALA

Communal Clout

IT WAS one more sign that communal politics in Kerala has a long life. For one week, Nairs from all over the state congregated in Trivandrum for a Nair sammelan, presided over by Kidangoor Gopalakrishna Pillai, chairman of the National Democratic Party (NDP), the political wing of the Nair community and a constituent of the ruling front. At the end of the bash, lakh people joined a grand rally.

The speeches and slogans called for reservation of jobs for the economically backward sections—the Nairs are not very high on the economic scale—and called for the withdrawal of the proposed urban land ceiling act—the Nairs have enduring ties with land. Kerala's 52 lakh Nairs were giving notice that they were not going to take things lying down any more.

Last fortnight's mass rally caused quite an upheaval even in a state used to communal chest-beating: Mrs Gandhi, who had come down for the merger *mela* of the A.K. Antony Congress and the Congress(I) spent more time with Pillai than with her own partymen. If rumours are correct, the NDP strongman could be sworn in as Karnataka governor sometime next year and the NDP will merge with the Congress(I) in the state. Apart from being a considerable political coup for the prime minister, this merger could rewrite the power equation in Kerala.

Pillai (left) with his supporters: show of strength

Demands: According to Pillai the Ezhavas—the largest community in the state at 60 lakh—and the Muslims were given preferential treatment by successive governments. He said: "The Ezhavas and the Muslims are the richest communities in Kerala but they get the full benefits of reservation as the poor, middle class Nairs are denied its benefits just because they are born to Nair women." He also condemned the Mandal Commission report as obnoxious to the core. The NDP chairman asserted that the community would never compromise on its long-standing demand for reservation on economic basis.

K.M. Mani, the state finance minister and leader of the Christian-dominated Kerala Congress (Mani) suggested that his party and the like-minded NDP merge to fight for a common cause, but Chief Minister K. Karunakaran nipped any such overtures by asking the NDP to merge with the Congress(I).

Dwindling Fortunes: Once the powerful and prosperous upper class of Kerala, the Nairs' fortunes deteriorated over the years, even though they constitute a fifth of the state's population. This despite the fact that six of the state's nine chief ministers—including the present one—have been Nairs; Mercy Ravi, the Catholic wife of the Ezhava Home Minister Vayalar Ravi says "only a Nair chief minister can survive in Trivandrum". However, this is hollow power as its benefits, according to Pillai and other Nair stalwarts, have not percolated down to the rest.

Pillai is also the general secretary of the Nair Service Society (NSS), the most powerful social organisation in the state with an annual turnover of Rs 15 crore. Headquartered in Changanassery in Kottayam district, the NSS has about 4,000 village-level units known as *karyogams*. It runs 1,125 schools and 23 colleges, as well as hospitals and hostels for working women. Says Pillai, who has been NSS general secretary for the last 16 years and formed the NDP six years ago: "As NSS general secretary nobody listened to me about the plight of the Nairs but the moment we formed a political party some of our simple demands were met."

Looking Ahead: Pillai denies that his party will merge with any other but observers feel that with him almost certain to become Karnataka governor the NDP will have to merge with the Congress(I). Said Pillai: "I have been offered a gubernatorial post but the party and the NSS will have to take the final decision." Adds Pattom Jayan, Pillai's right-hand man: "For the last 16 years he has been toiling for the betterment of the Nairs and today the NDP is a well-knit cadre-based party so there is no question of a merger."

Meanwhile, passions are running high in the other parties after the Nair sammelan. Mrs Gandhi had to assure Muslim League leaders that the reservation they now enjoyed would not be denied to them. Remarked state Industries Minister E. Ahmed: "Without Muslim League support no one can rule Kerala for a day." Newly baptised Congress(I) leader Antony felt that "communal politics is a dangerous trend." The backlash of the Nair show of strength will not be long coming: already the Muslim League and the Socialist Republic Party (SRP)—the political wing of the Ezhavas—are planning a similar show of strength early next year.

—SREEDHAR PILLA

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Stooping To Conquer

IT IS widely recognised in Washington that when it comes to diplomatic finesse the Pakistanis enjoy a distinct edge over the Indians. There's a *je ne sais quoi* element to Pakistani diplomatic behaviour in the West. They seem to grovel and sound obsequious and yet they don't. They willingly accept official chiding for Pakistan's sins of omission and commission but then turn round and play the role of the wounded ally to dramatic perfection.

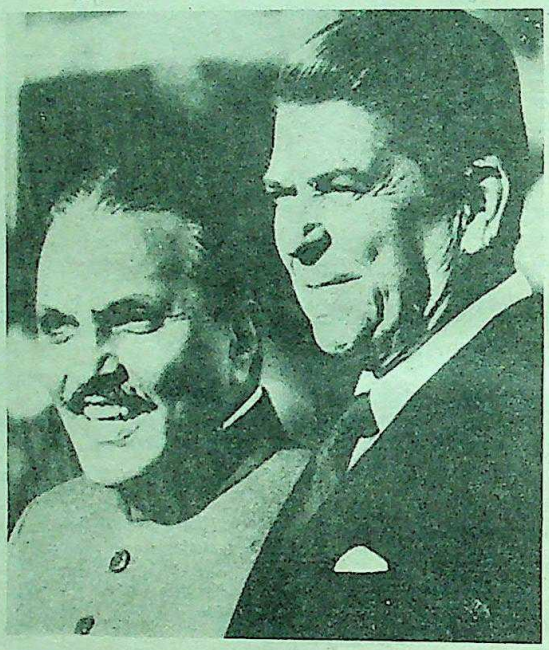
Unlike the Indians who are often accused of being Brahminically arrogant in their deadlines with foreign officials, the Pakistanis believe that pride has no place in the display of the diplomatic arts. And General Zia-ul-Haq followed this dictum faithfully during his recently concluded visit to the US. While Mrs Gandhi wooed Americans during her visit by stressing the common bonds between India and the US, playing down her dragon lady image and turning on the charm, Zia was able to disarm potentially hostile audiences with soap operatic appeals.

Differing Strategies: Can anybody imagine Mrs Gandhi telling American audiences something like: I plead before you to help India, those 680 million people, to have a better way of life? But General Zia did just that—without batting an eyelid—when he addressed the US Chambers of Commerce: "I plead before you to help Pakistan, those 84 million people, to have a better way of life." Zia's appeal to the US was disarmingly simple: I am here as a military man, with my warts showing. I can be of some, even limited, importance to your country. Don't stand in judgement of my regime—particularly by your standards. Just give me my share of what you owe me.

A comparison between the Zia and Gandhi visits to Washington is awash with ironies. Even though Indo-American relations have been described as being at their worst before the Gandhi trip, things were not really so bad. There are more serious bilateral disputes between the US and Canada than between India and the US. Tarapur was an irritant, no more. The sale of F-16 planes to Pakistan was a new wrinkle in the age-old problem of American arms aid to Pakistan. Differences over Kampuchea could always be aired at the United Nations. Yet Mrs Gandhi was credited with accomplishing a near-miraculous turn around in Indo-US relations.

Inhibiting Factors: In contrast, Zia—the faithful US ally against the faithless Soviets—was headed for real turbulence in America. True, the US had pledged $3.2 billion to Pakistan in arms and economic assistance to counter Soviet 'designs' in the region. True, Pakistan is considered an important frontline state in the 'strategic consensus' that threatened to collapse with the fall of the Shah of Iran. But there were also serious, seemingly insurmountable problems between Islamabad and Washington.

The Senate and the House Foreign Relations Committees had soured on Zia's human rights record. The Senate had issued a scathing denunciation of the Zia regime and threatened to cut off all aid unless Zia liberalised his rule. Mrs Gandhi's warm her personal rapport with President Ronald Reagan has de-fanged some of the Administration's anti-India hawks. And the heavy focus of the visit on Indian democracy has served as an indirect condemnation of Pakistani authoritarianism, of Americans cosying up with a dictator.



Using Reagan's own phrase, Zia told the US President at their first meeting: "You and I have a rendezvous with destiny"... At the end of his 10-day tour, Zia said: "I have not only had a handshake. I am practically walking with a bouquet."

Even within the Administration senior officials had begun sniping at the Pakistani connection. They were aware that anti-Americanism within Pakistan is at an all-time high. They had not forgotten the sacking of the American Embassy in Pakistan in 1979, the support in Pakistan for Ayatollah Khomeini after the Americans were taken hostage, and the scathing criticism by the Pakistani Government of former President Jimmy Carter's abortive helicopter rescue mission in Iran.

Little Faith: Administration officials as well as members of Congress had never trusted assurances from Zia that he had no plans to build a nuclear bomb. Other questioned Pakistani "loyalty" against the backdrop of former foreign minister Agha Shahi's statements that Pakistan had nothing to fear from the Soviets. Also under serious criticism in the US was the Zia regime's unwillingness or inability to prevent the flow of Pakistani heroin into the United States.

Zia wasn't about to walk into a bed of roses, and on the eve of his visit the US Air Force raised strenuous objections to equipping the first shipment of F-16s to Pakistan with sophisticated avionics equipment on the grounds that US National Security interests would be jeopardised. Zia breezed through with aplomb. There were the usual military honours, the ceremonies on the White House lawn, the state dinners, the lunches at the State Department, the appearances before the Press Club and the Se

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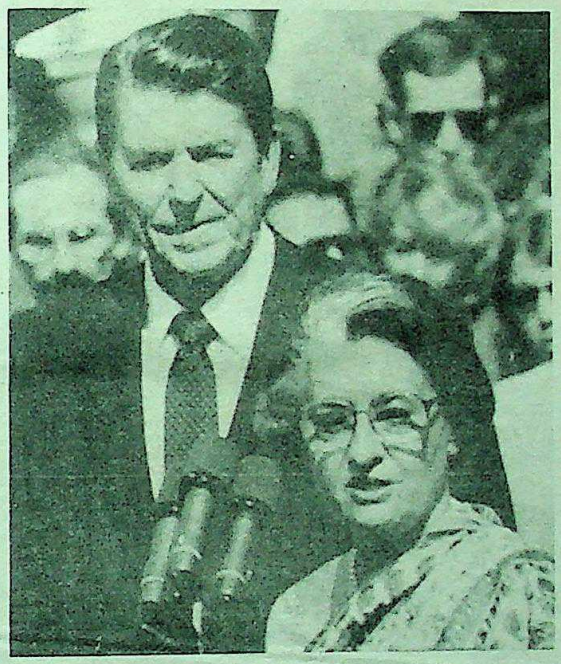
and House of Representatives behind closed doors. Official spokesmen pronounced the visit an unqualified success.

Members of Congress told reporters in off-the-record conversations that Zia was "charming"; that "he was doing all in his power to control the narcotics traffic"; he had "removed various misunderstandings about his regime"; that he "has a sense of history"; that he was "able and informed"; even "subtle". There were some misgivings, however, about Zia's assurances about his nation's nuclear bomb project. "We have seen detailed intelligence information, including clear photographs that the Zia regime is going all out to make a nuclear weapon," one Congressman confided.

Here are notes of some of the highlights of the Zia visit and how he dealt with various issues:

Zia and Reagan: Reagan is said to have been impressed with Zia and went out of his way not to make him feel uncomfortable. Using Reagan's own phrase, Zia told the US President at their first meeting: "You and I have a rendezvous with destiny." Even though the trip was low-key in comparison with Mrs Gandhi's visit—it did not receive the front-page treatment that her's did—Zia said at the end of his 10-day tour: "I have not only had a handshake, I am practically walking with a bouquet."



The F-16 Problem: He certainly walked away with his first consignment after what had seemed to be an intractable dilemma. According to several sources Pakistan got almost all the Avionics equipment it wanted after the Pakistan delegation agreed to sign an agreement allowing American safeguards over the equipment and promising not to share any information with other countries without US approval.

Indo-Pakistan Relations: Zia caught everybody by surprise by adopting a meticulously lovish, friendly, and accommodating attitude towards India. He even parroted Mrs Gandhi's position on North-South economic relations, the importance of non-alignment, and the crucial need of multilateral lending to developing countries.

Pakistani officials confided that there was not a single negative reference to India in any of the talks they held with the Reagan Administration. In fact, Reagan praised Zia for "your efforts and those of the Indian Government to reconcile your differences". And Zia never lost an opportunity to stress that one of his main goals was better relations with India.

Zia declared in New York: "The time has come to discard the earlier practice of invariably juxtaposing Pakistan against India and measuring us on the touchstone of that country in the US estimation of its interests in that area. Recent talks between India and Pakistan have invalidated the concept that the advantage of the one could be ensured only to the detriment of the other."

The Afghanistan Problem: Zia seemed to come closer to India's position on the subject. Surprisingly, he even lectured some members of Congress about Russia's motivations in invading Afghanistan. He said that Afghanistan had been a "vacuum" and that the Soviets could not tolerate that on their border.

What stuck out dramatically was the absence of anti-Soviet rhetoric in Zia's appearances here. He described Yuri Andropov, whom he met at President Leonid Brezhnev's funeral, as a reasonable man "who might be persuaded to enter a negotiated settlement on Afghanistan". The Soviets, Zia said, were showing a new flexibility on the issue. Even though Zia continues to say that he will not negotiate with the Karmal regime in Kabul because it came to power on the backs of Russian tanks he has not declined to negotiate indirectly.

Analysts point out that differences are already appearing in the American and Pakistani points of view. Because of the incredible pressure from the millions of Afghan refugees on Pakistani soil Zia is signalling that he would be willing to start negotiating for a Soviet withdrawal. This differs from the American hard line view which favours a complete withdrawal first and negotiations later.

Human Rights Issues: Zia defended his military take-over by saying he had prevented Pakistan from plunging into civil war. He stated publicly that he had not been pressured on the human rights question by the Reagan Administration either in private or at Cabinet-level discussions. "We are not apologetic about military government," he told a gathering in San Francisco, "the army is in no hurry to abandon power." His standard response to questions about public flogging and human rights violations was: "We inherited flogging from the British. In Islam, too, whipping is allowed." And he offered this rare twist: "Pakistan is guilty of violating human rights by utopian standards but Islamic standards of human rights are perhaps as high in Pakistan as Amnesty International would like them to be."

Nuclear Issues: He echoed the Indian position that the developing world ought to be allowed to pursue nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes. But he adamantly refused to submit to international safeguards or inspections unless India agreed to a regional nuclear free zone and signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Narcotics Traffic: He agreed that Pakistan had a narcotics trafficking problem but professed to have little control over areas in the North-West Frontier Province where the opium is grown. Instead he urged the US Government to pass more stringent laws to prevent profits from drug trafficking in the US.

Mrs Gandhi's visit, her personal rapport with President Ronald Reagan has de-fanged some of the Administration's anti-Indian hawks. And the heavy focus of that visit on Indian democracy has served as an indirect condemnation of Pakistan authoritarianism.

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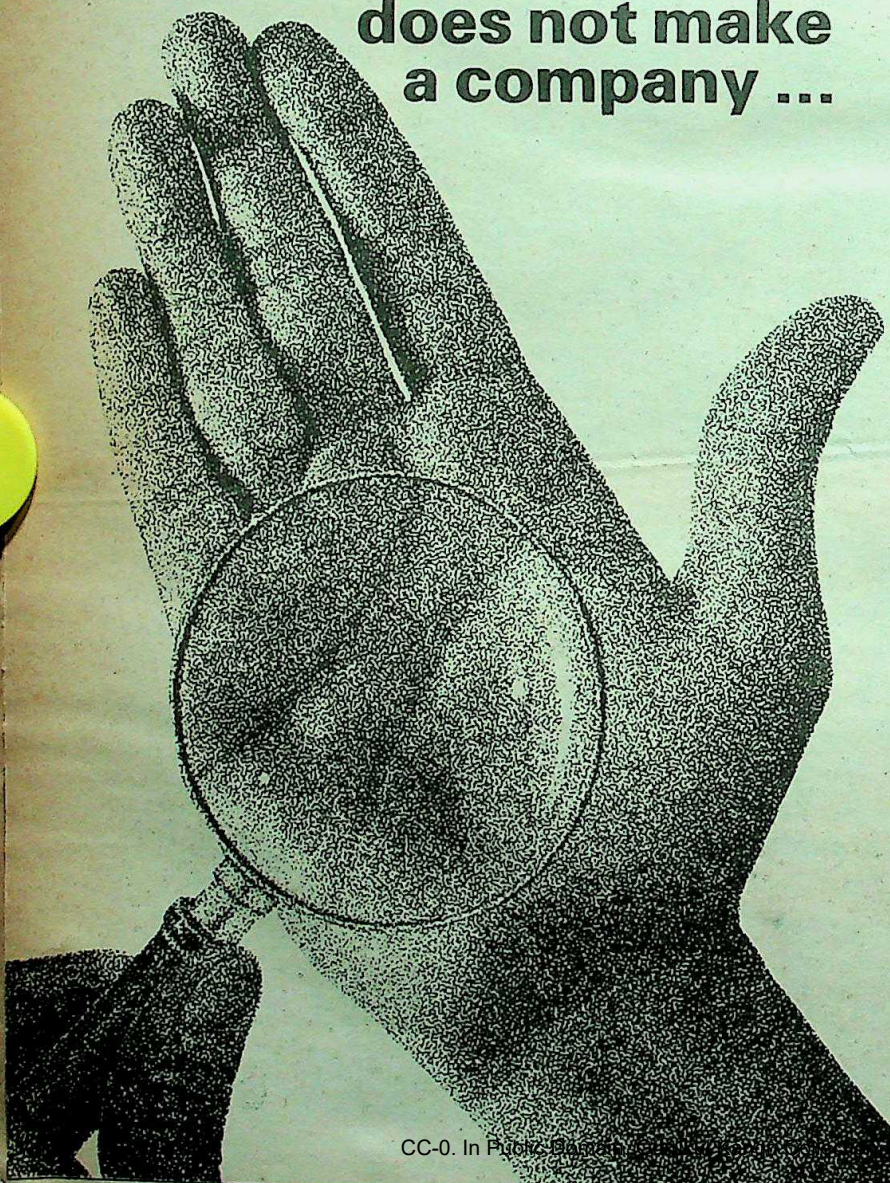

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EST GERMANY

The Baby Business

THE HEAVY diamond ring and the flashy jewellery worn by the elegantly dressed white skinned lady epping out of the immigration ring at rankfurt's busy Rhein-Main airport juxaposed sharply with the pale, weak and ndernourished baby she was carrying in er arms. The human cargo was to be elivered to the expectant German foster arents who were anxiously waiting outide to receive the tiny passenger. The cold nd dismal winter weather greeting the inant on its arrival in Germany was a evere contrast to the hot and sticky ir of Bombay from where it had een picked up.

Babies have become the latest export ommodity in a number of developing ountries where organisations engaged in nscrupulous adoption practices have muhroomed. The middle class childless couples in many West European countries, notably the Federal Republic of Germany, have found a convenient way to fulfil their lifetime ambition to have a child—they simply adopt one from poor countries like India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Thailand.

The ever-sprouting slums of big cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Colombo or Bangkok are potential breeding grounds for this trade. The growing demand in West European countries and the abundance of supply in the Third World countries have made trafficking in babies, a flourishing trade with agents and middlemen out to exploit the situation and make a fast buck. A survey carried out recently by a German church organisation revealed that some 50,000 orphaned children were found in the orphan homes of Calcutta alone. The overall orphan population in India is large enough to cater to the needs of childless couples in the entire West.

Childless Couples: The rich industrialised West went through a decline in population in the '70s—a decade of prosperity and social enlightenment for many, coupled with all the sophisticated means of family control. Many childless couples began to experience an emptiness in their lives and because they would not or could not have children of their own, preferred to adopt a child from one of the developing countries.

Most German couples would prefer to adopt white children but since this is not easy, the next step is to adopt a child from a Third World country. Displaying a dark-skinned child in a family group picture has become the 'in' thing in many Nordic countries. German psychologists and sociologists have tried to explain this trend by pointing out that many of these couples come from well-to-do circles and take pride in calling themselves liberal, projecting a *Weltanschaung* (philosophy of life) which stretches far beyond the frontiers of their native country and embraces the whole world.

A large number of children from many Third World countries arrive in the Federal Republic of Germany through agencies whose credentials are questionable. A fraction of the adoption cases do pass through officially recognised agencies like the *Terre des Hommes, Pro Infante* or the International Social Service—all of which meticulously sieve adoption requests and rigidly verify the bonafides of prospective foster parents to ensure minimisation of risks and maximisation of compatability between the parent and adopted child. Recognised agencies operate on the principle of genuinely wanting to help the child. An adoption case is processed only when the child to be adopted cannot be first helped in its own native country. These agencies claim that the objective pursued by them is to bring the parents to the child and not the child to the parents. But some German parents simply do not have the patience to stand the rigours of the protracted battle against red tape in their endeavour to adopt a child.

Unofficial Agencies: The easiest way out of this nerve-racking bureaucratic encounter is to avail the services of an adoption agency whose promises of "home delivery services of the baby of your choice" would make the exorbitant sums of fee charged by them look like small change. "The cute looking baby with the big black rolling eyes", as a "baby catalogue" propagates, is a very strong temptation which few German parents can resist. A German couple can obtain a baby in less than three weeks through dubious means as compared to the gruelling agony of completing the entire mountain of paperwork which would entail anything between six months and two years. More than 1,000 children from Third World countries, including India, land on German soil through the services of other non-recognised agencies.

Neighbouring Holland has become the hotbed for the flourishing trafficking of babies. Dutch agencies have been very successful in supplying babies to German parents, notwithstanding the opposition from Church organisations and social workers both in Holland and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Swantje Strieder, a journalist working for the leading West German magazine *Der Spiegel*, who investigated the sources of babies sent from the Third World to Western Europe, especially to the Federal Republic of Germany, discover

The cover of *Der Spiegel* which carried Strieder's investigation: adopting Third World babies

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ed the offices of several agencies in Holland which offer children to prospective German parents. One such organisation is called *Flash* ("Foundation, Life, Adoption Services and Happiness"). *Flash* specialises in quick supply of children, unlike the official agencies which thoroughly screen the background of the would-be parents.

According to Strieder, the process of adoption of Sri Lankan babies starts after Dammas Hordijk, the director of *Flash*, instructs the prospective parents to leave for Colombo from where they are to pick up the baby. Although the couple arrive as ordinary tourists in Colombo, they are given a warm reception by the Sri Lankan *Flash* representative. The representative, who herds together all such German and Dutch "tourists", ensures that they are all well looked after and put up in five-star hotels. Meanwhile, the agents set the adoption ball rolling while the visitors go sightseeing.

The first meeting—which the *Flash* representative calls "the feeling of being parents"—between the infant and the foster parents takes place in a lawyer's office, where the baby is dressed and fed by them. The next day, the couple, dressed in their best, arrive at the office of the commissioner—who apparently attaches considerable importance to outward appearances—who seals the adoption *a la Sri Lanka*. *Flash* collects a neat sum equivalent to Rs 13,000 (*Terre des Hommes*, the official agency, takes only Rs 14,000) for the adoption. The entire package tour of Sri Lanka, including the adoption fee, costs the new parents about Rs 44,000.

In many cases, the poverty stricken mothers are offered money as compensation to part with their children.

Terre des Hommes is critical of the methods employed by the *Flash* agents in Sri Lanka. In many cases, *Terre des Hommes* maintains, the poverty stricken mothers of the children are offered money as compensation to part with their children. *Flash* agents in Sri Lanka also do a lot of "scouting" work, keeping an eye particularly on single expectant mothers who have to live with the stigma of giving birth to an illegitimate child, since the orthodox Buddhist society would never accept them.

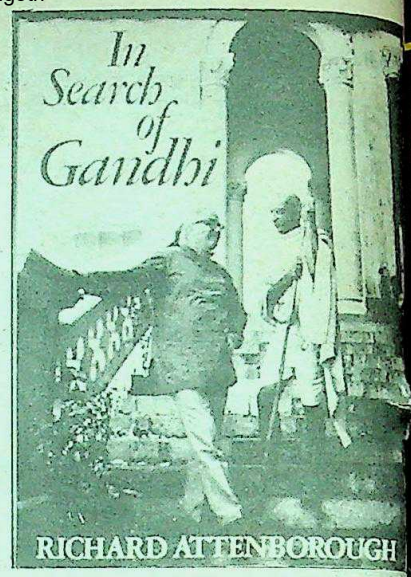
Legal Hurdles: *Flash* is not the only adoption agency of its kind operating in Sri Lanka. There are Scandinavian, Australian and Swiss organisations which supply children to their respective countries. Names like *Angels' Home, Love, Bliss* and *Heavenly Abode*—pompous and lofty as they may sound—have a propensity to go underground as quickly as they surface. A dozen similar organisations have sprouted in Holland, each competing against the other for the rich German market, even though they are considered illegal under German law.

When German parents adopt Third Word children, the adoption is initially not recognised under German law. The interpretation of the crucial paragraph 328 of the German Civil Law is that an overseas adoption is "accepted" but not recognised, irrespective of whether the adoption took place through dubious agents or officially recognised agencies. This non-recognition of adoption is circumvented by a legal ruse called the "second adoption"—the foster parents adopt the child for the second time, this time under German law. Again, this ruse, used by many, entails long-winded procedures and paperwork, all aimed at establishing the bonafides of the case and cementing the moral, legal and financial commitment of the parents.

While it is fashionable in most developing countries to voice criticism at the adoption practices, very little if anything is done about the root causes which lie in the grinding poverty and unjust income distribution. Germans themselves are aghast at the problems of the poor countries and are working out ways and means of stopping clandestine adoptions. The apex organisation of the youth offices in the Federal Republic of Germany has recommended that rigid checks of these children be instituted on their arrival and German courts be asked to intensify their checks on adoption cases. Many official agencies have prescribed that the native countries of the adopted children insist on seeing a report from the youth offices on the suitability of the foster parents before approving the adoption.

These recommendations, undoubtedly well-meaning, are likely to be largely ineffective as long as the poor South is unable to feed its hungry masses. Agents and middlemen will always find ways of evading the hurdles being set up and no amount of bureaucratic safeguards can deter them. A hungry stomach is after all the easiest catch in the corruption net.

—MANIK MEHTA in Bonn



Attenborough's book on the filming of Ga

US

Cashing In On Gandhi

A LIGHT snow is falling steadil New York City—the first o season, on the heels of an tionally balmy December. It is well be noon on a Saturday, the first day of week-end when New Yorkers are known to stir. Yet the ticket queue for noon show at the Ziegfeld Theatre in town Manhattan is already half-a-block long. What has stirred these durate souls to shuffle around waiting tickets? It is Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi*.

Gandhi, the panoramic history of Mahatma, released last fortnight in se ted theatres in New York, Washing D.C. and Los Angeles to unanimo laudatory reviews. The influential *York Times* called it "an amazi authentic-looking movie, sincere aware of its responsibilities in the oramic manner". Stanley Kaufmann the erudite *The New Republic* weekly voted two pages in his December 13th view. "Attenborough has done virtually that sincerity, dedication and professi competence can do. All that's wante the chronicle, done as faithfully and dibly and compactly as possible." Kroll of *Newsweek* has dubbed it a m see movie for the year. With Kingsley's sterling performance as wel intelligent performances by Roshan (Jawaharlal Nehru), Alyque Padam sinister Mohammad Ali Jinnah and S

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ffrey as the shrewd Sardar Patel, the m is a virtual shoo-in for a major award the American Oscars in March 1983.

The initial success and the inevitable ord-of-mouth publicity is sure to make e film one of the most memorable in the dustry's history. Made over a span of 20 ears for $22 million (Rs. 21 crore) co-roduced with the Film Development Corpo-ation of India's largest ever grant, has been the centre of controversy India and a gossiped-about curiosity broad.

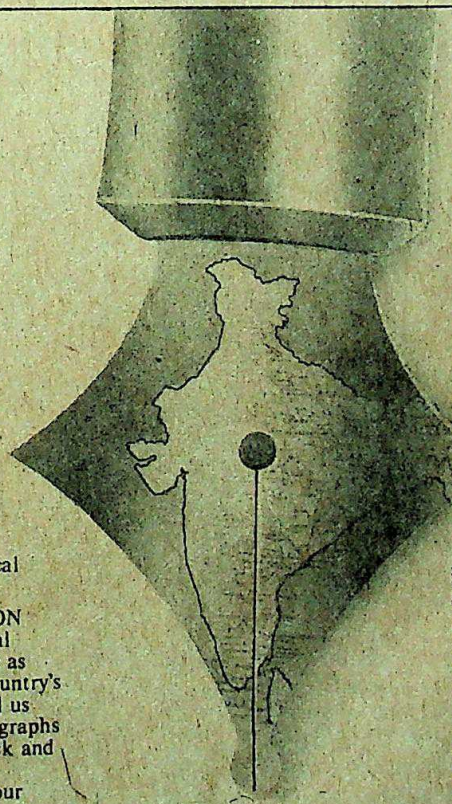
Print Popularity: The importance of is film in the US can be gauged by the elping hand that another ever-watchful edia—the book publishing industry—is iving it. Always on the look-out for a tie-in" in this media-conscious culture, e book industry regularly produces ack-written novelisations of top-grossing ovie screenplays. Reprinting of original ource material of theatre plays, films, ade-for-television scripts is a must for ade publishers.

Gandhi, however, has brought in ano-her element: the stepsister of the publish-g trade, the hitherto obscure academic nd scholarly publishers into the midst of ustling commercial activity. At last count, the book industry's trade journals, *Publishers Weekly*, lists over 25 books being reprinted or about to be published on Mahatma Gandhi. Even Gandhi's own *Swaraj In One Year*, originally published in 1921, is being brought out by AMS Press in New York. The three books that are benefiting most from this renewed interest are Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre's 1975 bestseller, *Freedom at Midnight* with a new jacket and a new price and 2 million copies in print; Louis Fischer's 1954 *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World* with 1 million copies in print and Gandhi's writings of non-violence published by New Directions Press in New York with an introduction by the late Thomas Merton written in 1965. The latter has 70,000 copies in print. Scattered through the list are a number of books for which Richard Attenborough has personally written forewords and afterwords and selected photographs. Also, Charles Scribner and Sons, the venerable Fifth Avenue bookstore has a special display of paperback books on Gandhi.

In a society where the visual media has a particularly exalted position, the interest in things Indian is already apparent. Edith Terry, a writer for *Business Week* magazine, told this reporter after a screening of *Gandhi* that she was going to buy more record albums by Ravi Shankar. Ravi Shankar composed the music for the film. Michael Rosenfeld, a local television producer, cited the parallels between the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's and the Indian nationalist movement prompting his friend to say: "This philosophical link is drawing more blacks to a film such as this than *Ben Hur* and *Lawrence of Arabia*. It is not an art-house movie, shown to a small coterie of the already-converted; it is what an ideal film should be: drama and information." Lisa Samson, production coordinator at New York University's undergraduate Film and Television department said it left her with a sense of curiosity about Gandhi's personality. Said she: "The nature of the film couldn't allow for an exploration of such complexity and I would like to read his writings for that very reason."

If nothing else, the film *Gandhi* has provoked Americans to inquire more deeply about Indian history and the variety of social forces at play on the subcontinent than all the political delegations to this country for the last few years.

—AMIT SHAH in New York



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Signs Of The Times

THERE was the baby-faced ex-pilot, all thumbs as he handled the controls in his political flight simulator; the rough-spun son of the soil, a man of diamond-hard loyalty to the ruling family, catapulted into a devalued presidency; the freckle-faced widow in rebellious flow, queen of the mimics and endowed with a hard nose; the superstar who almost became god as his life returned to him in a hospital bed; the sleek and deadly fighter planes that the nation and its neighbour coveted; the circuses in the states that ran rings around each other, the ring-masters marching to a distant drummer in Delhi; and a baby elephant that melted from flesh into myth into flowery effigy—these were the dominant images of the year, a year that was turgid and yet tempestuous.

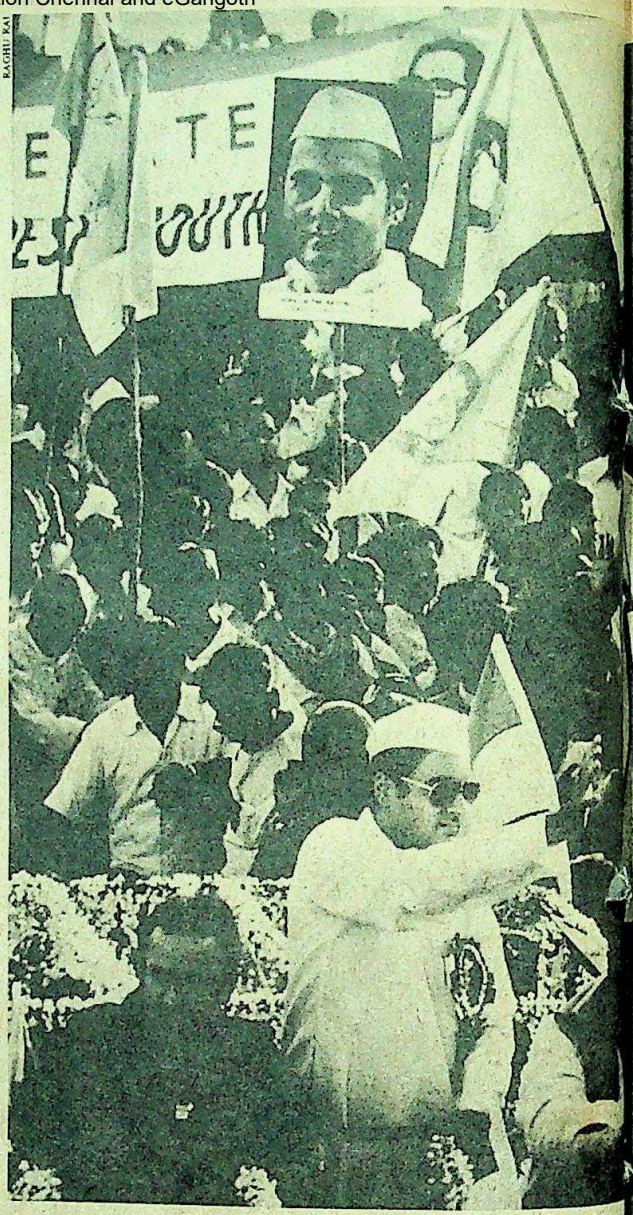
In recollection, the year's lows outweighed its highs. The ruling party was infected by the contagious disease of dissidence. Originating in Maharashtra when Abdul Rehman Antulay was replaced in disgrace by Babasaheb Bhosale, it spread untamed and fast to almost every Congress(I) state, reaching a crescendo as the year ground to an end, and three states, two of them Indira Gandhi's citadels, went to the polls. Added to this cacophony was the anger and the prickliness of Punjab and Assam; regionalism and a growing intransigence among the Akalis and the Assam agitationists seemed to strike up an ominous orchestra for the Centre. Through it all, the nations disparity grew in focus, and the whole seemed to be composed of parts bound by a centripetal force that was growing weaker.

Then there were the highs: the brilliantly-orchestrated and supremely successful Asian Games held in Delhi's early winter chill, which represented India's finest hour. It was a spirit-lifting and emphatic example of what the country was capable of, a glimpse of the enormous potential that lay fallow below the surface. There was the India Festival in London, a razzle-dazzle live advertisement for the country. And there were the prime minister's trips abroad, showing her up at her best as she carried the flag into the White House and the Kremlin.

Base Spectacle: At other times the Government worked, electing to put up spectacles that rallied more support than its policies. The return of the forgotten 'Sanjay Brigade' was symbolised in its basest form by the Cecil B. DeMille-style political extravaganza in Bangalore. There, Rajiv Gandhi's anointment as Sanjay's spiritual heir took place amidst the militancy, sycophancy and bravado that had epitomised the ruling party's Emergency image.

The appointment of Antulay's successor in Maharashtra demonstrated the ruling party's endless capacity for flabby compromise. Bhosale was a Falstaff among knaves, and no less entertaining was the comedy in Andhra Pradesh, where Chenna Reddy was succeeded by Tangaturi Anjiah in October 1980, who was succeeded by Bhavanam Venkatram in February 1982, who was succeeded by Vijayabhaskara Reddy in September. The only tragic figure in this procession of laughs was Vishwanath Pratap Singh, whose police killed hundreds of innocent villagers after calling them dacoits but could not bag the bigger dacoits who killed Singh's brother and eventually forced his conscientious exit.

Events took a predictable turn in the political arena. Two



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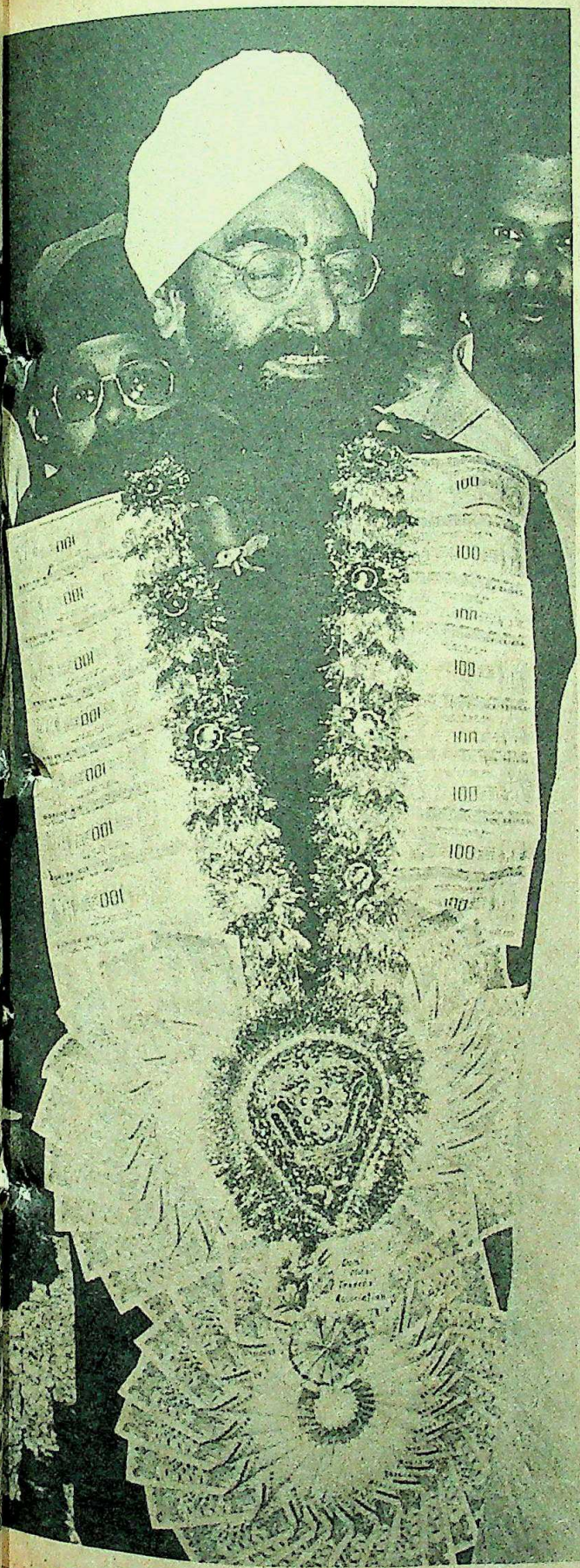

CHANDU MHATRE

(Clockwise from extreme left) Maneka Gandh waxing eloquent in Amethi; Rajiv makes the grad in Bangalore; Zail Singh noteworthy as President and Bachchan back from the brink

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years after storming back to power, Mrs Gandhi's Congress(I) brought the art of do-nothing to a lofty state. While the Government surveyed its wrinkles in a cracked mirror, Mrs Gandhi commissioned 'Operation Facelift', a cornucopia of cosmetic changes meant essentially to project a glowing image of action.

Musical Chairs: Flourishing a brand new 20-point programme, the prime minister went in for the seventh reshuffle of her Cabinet since 1980 in September. It was an action breathtaking in its purposelessness, involving seven of her 18 Cabinet colleagues and the induction of six new faces into an obese council of ministers. It was absurd political theatre, and the floorboards echoed with desperation and uncertainty.

More despair was being given birth to. Industry complained loudly about a recessionary squeeze while the Government said conditions had never been better. But a general credit squeeze generated gloom that was heightened when militant trade union guru Datta Samant spearheaded a historic strike of textile workers in Bombay that brought 60 mills to a standstill and turned that city's thriving industrial landscape into a bleak vista of cold chimneys and silent looms.

Militancy, in fact, seemed to be a catching disease. Pakistan got its first F-16s from the United States as part of a multi-billion dollar military aid package, while the Indian Government went shopping for the French Mirage 2000 and beefed up its Jaguar squadrons as the low-level fighter-bombers began to come off the Hindustan Aeronautics assembly-line in Bangalore.

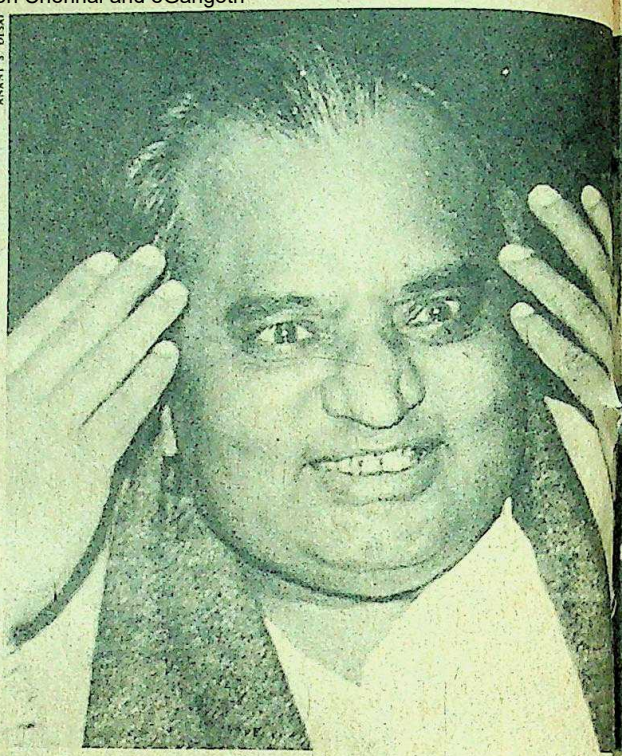
THERE was also the two nations' minuet to the strains of Pakistan's blossoming nuclear policy. India wanted a friendship treaty and Pakistan wanted a no-war pact. President Zia-ul-Haq's brief tete-a-tete with Mrs Gandhi in New Delhi in November helped hasten the thaw, and was followed by Pakistani Foreign Secretary Niaz Naik's visit in December. A joint commission was set up to work out modalities in a host of non-military matters, and peace was being talked about by both sides with more earnestness than ever before.

The spotlight also fell on where a chapter and a dynasty came to an end with the death of Palden Thondup Namgyal, the former chogyal of Sikkim. The tiny Himalayan kingdom swung back into news as thousands of mourners flocked to pay the departed leader an emotional farewell.

Fortunately for the nation's morale, some achievements punctuated the air of drift and despondency. In March, India joined a very select group when a top secret expedition successfully planted the tricolour on the forbidding wastes of Antarctica, thus establishing a permanent foothold on what could prove a promising piece of real estate in the near future. Shortly after, the nation's image received another boost when the Festival of India in London was inaugurated by Mrs Gandhi, and a glittering cast that included Prince Charles and Margaret Thatcher added its applause to a sudden upsurge in interest in Indian arts, craft, history and culture.

Family Feud: It proved a temporary reprieve. Mrs Gandhi returned from London to land straight in the arms of a messy family squabble that was splashed all over the front pages in graphic detail. The fracas ended with her rebellious daughter-in-law, Maneka Gandhi, storming out of the prime minister's house with son, luggage and dogs—but not out of Mrs Gandhi's political life.

Smarting from the treatment she had received, Maneka lashed out at the Gandhi family and washed exceedingly soiled linen in public. Her exile from 1 Safdarjung Road finally brought about her political debut, helped along by disgruntled Sanjay loyalists who hopped nimbly on to the newly-created bandwagon. By year's end the newest Mrs Gandhi was regularly barnstorming


ANANT S. DESAI

RAGHU RAI

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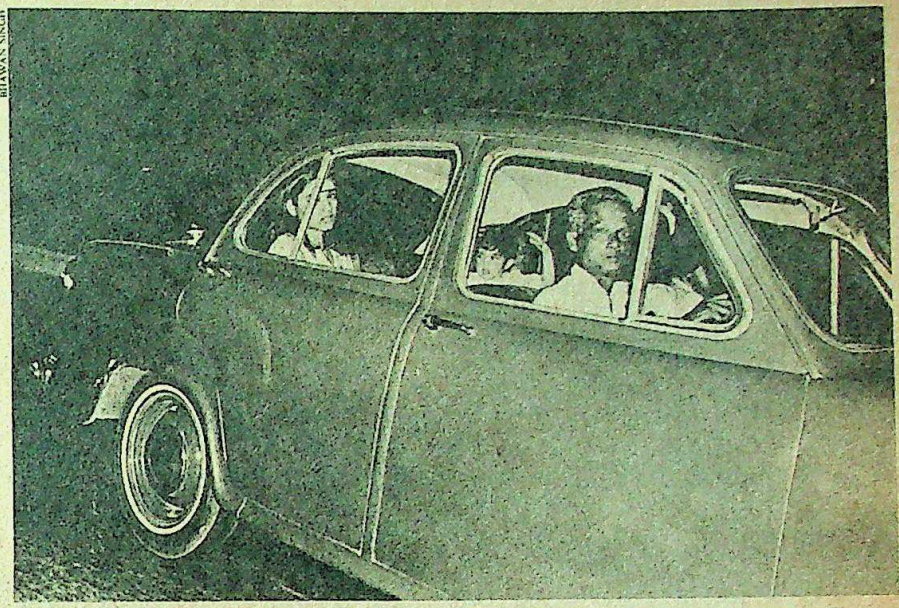
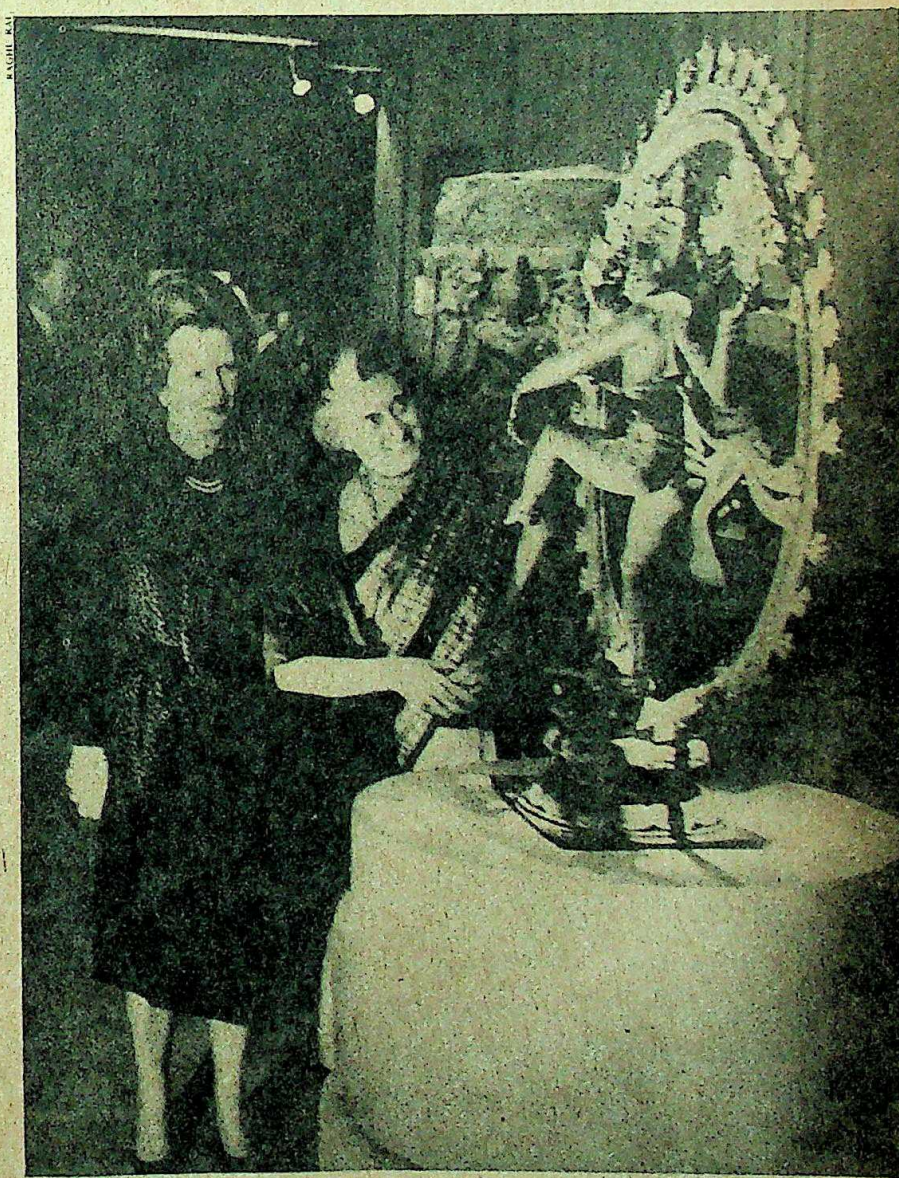


BHAWAN SINGH



RAGHU RAI

(Clockwise from left) Sikkim's tearful farewell to its former leader, the Chogyal; Bhosale in goggle-eyed wonder; Samant sternly stubborn; Maneka leaving home; Thatcher and Mrs Gandhi at the Festival of India

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the Congress(I) citadels, carrying the battle into the enemy camp. While she was adept at imitating her mother-in-law's populist gestures, she was obviously discovering that being on the receiving end for a change was not an enjoyable experience, and that she was dealing more with political foes than inimical in-laws.

The mother-in-law, too, was not in a position to be sanguine. Assembly elections held in four states in June gave the ruling party's complacency a rude jolt, when it barely scraped through in three states and obtained a minority in the fourth. But Haryana was transformed into a market-place of legislative flesh as the Congress(I)'s Bhajan Lal and the Lok Dal's Devi Lal bought supporters like strumpets in a sleazy brothel.

Ethical Nadir: Bhajan Lal helped bring the electorate's image of a politician to its lowest ebb since Independence, making that avocation sound like a four-letter word. Legislators were herded together and kept under armed guard while the price of their souls and their loyalties was fixed. Defections had become the dominating element of the Congress(I)'s polity, and this was underlined in Gujarat in December, when a strong group of dissidents chose to walk out of the Congress(I) rather than wait for the chief minister to change.

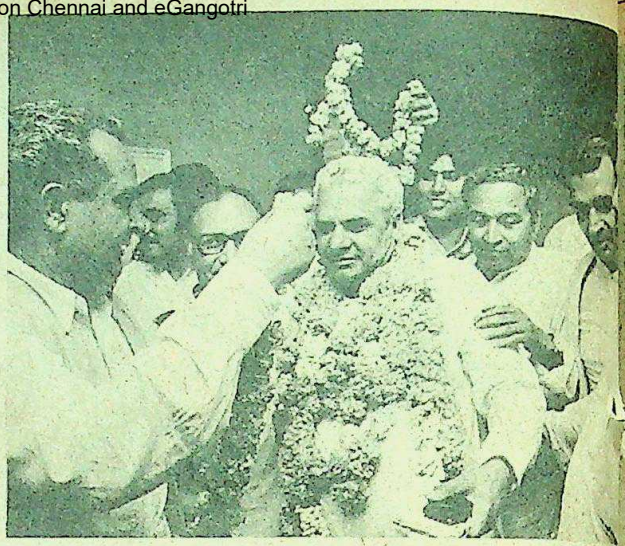
Corruption had become legal tender, and political integrity an archaeological commodity. Through all the battering, the only brightness came from the fact that prices had remained steady for more than a year. But the conditions attached to the Government's loan from the International Monetary Fund, and the difficulty of sticking to them with overdrawn state finances and widespread drought, generated considerable controversy. While the trade gap threatened to increase, the Government blithely liberalised imports and went in for a shopping spree, buying up steel plants and super-thermal stations while it transformed the country into a major buyer in world markets. Sensing the new mood, the multinationals came knocking on the nation's door, led by the Japanese juggernauts. The ill-starred Maruti project finally landed in Suzuki's lap, and other Japanese car manufacturers tied up contracts to set up joint ventures in a suddenly rejuvenated Indian automotive market.

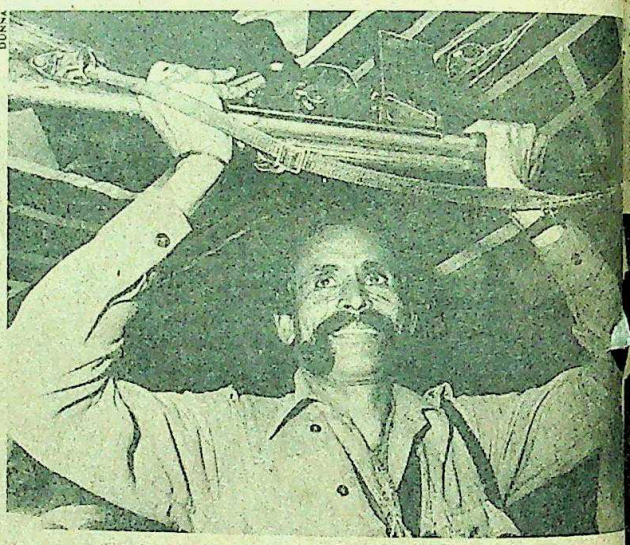
At the human level, there was a succession of bad news throughout the year, but easily the most distressing trend came with the sudden rash of bride-burning incidents in north India over dowry disputes. A TV set became more valuable than the life of a young woman, and a new blood sport was born. In fact, northern India's history was largely writ in blood as the dacoit menace loomed larger and the surrender of one, Malkhan Singh, was turned into an event more befitting the return of an exiled king than a bloodthirsty killer of men.

Smooth Succession: Meanwhile, with the overwhelming majority the ruling party enjoyed in Parliament and the state legislatures, Giani Zail Singh succeeded Neelam Sanjiva Reddy without undue fuss. The nomination was obviously a reward for Zail Singh's unabashed loyalty to his *rahnumas* (patrons) and also because his rivalry with Punjab Chief Minister Darbara Singh had introduced a thorny element into that state's simmering unrest.

The Sikh militants' raucous war cries were reinforced with a bristling thicket of spears and threats, and Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's emergence as the cheer leader in the Sikhs' religious chauvinism was made even more explosive when the Akali Dal, led by H.S. Longowal, declared war on the Government unless its demands were conceded. The Sikh militancy capped a growing alienation between different communities, and the year ended with another insoluble problem when the 20th round of talks between the Assam agitation leaders and the Government since June 1979 ended in bitter impasse.

It seemed in fact that India performed really well only when





DUNNA

CREATIVE EYE

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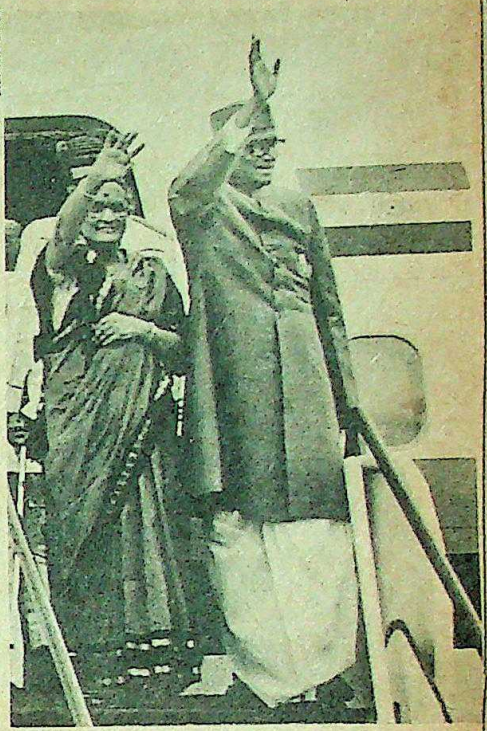
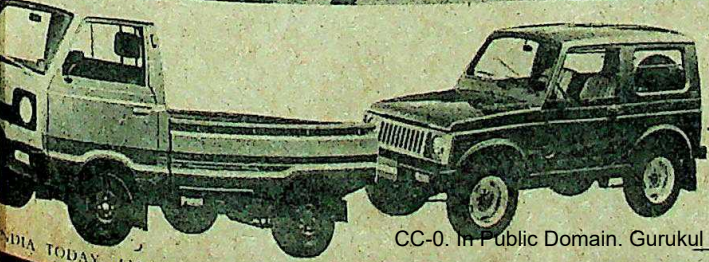


BHAWAN SINGH



(Clockwise from extreme left) Suzuki makes it bow; protesting against bride-burning; Malkhan farewell to arms; Bhajan Lal in dubious victory Mrs Gandhi charms America; Reddy's last hurra and Bhindranwale holding court

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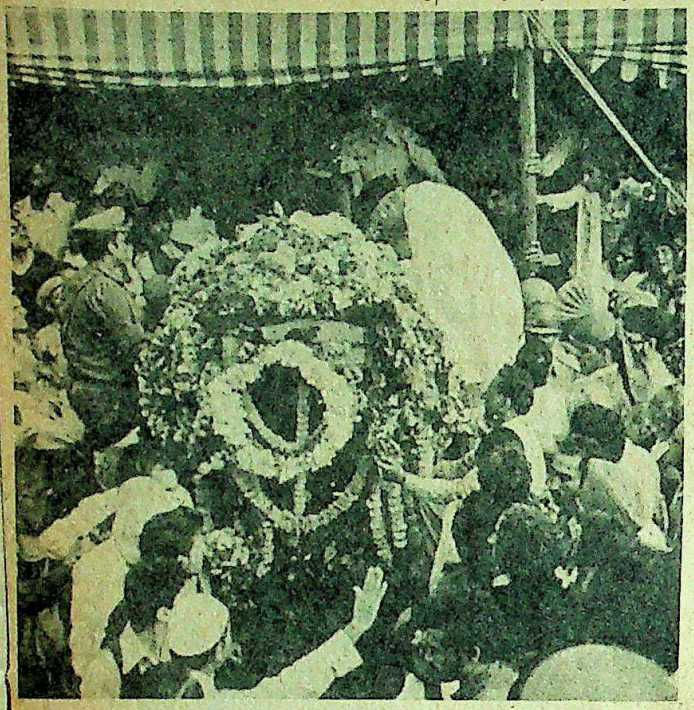
SUMAN DUBEY



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

(Clockwise from left) Farooq and Kashmir goodbye to the Sheikh; Jagannath Mishra h tough: Orissa flood victims grab food pack

Mrs Gandhi went abroad. In July, her *tour de force* of the United States charmed President Reagan and a vast slice of the American people. The prime minister enhanced her international image and effectively halted the slide in Indo-US relations.

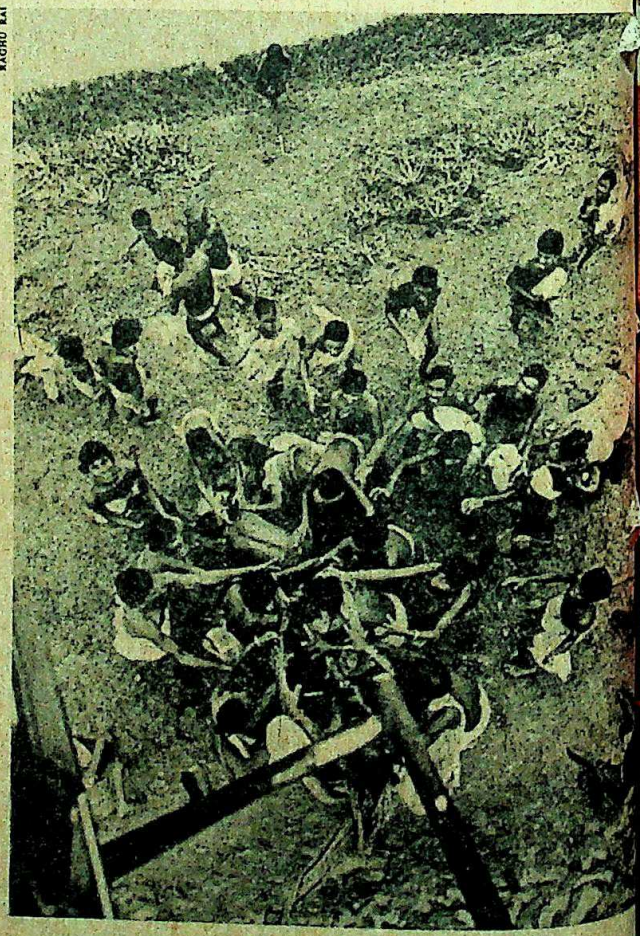
WHILE Mrs Gandhi was bowling America over, another national figure was making headlines back home. Lanky superstar Amitabh Bachchan battled for his life for weeks after an accident during filming, and the entire nation seemed to will him to stay alive with prayers, posters, and lonely vigils outside the Bombay hospital where he lay. It was moving human drama, paling all of Bachchan's prodigious celluloid output, and suddenly, towards year-end, the fully recovered actor put on the make-up of a superman who would add that magical crowd-pulling charisma of his to the beleaguered party of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi.

In the end, the headlines were dominated by India's politicians. In Bihar, Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra clumsily tried to stem the increasing media exposures of his state's orgy of corruption and crime with a harsh Press Bill. The bill was met, however, by a nation-wide protest from the press, and the snowballing resistance led, by the end of the year, to a victory of sorts when the ball was tossed back into the Government's court for a final decision.

The Press Bill, however, was an overt admission of the desperate straits the Government found itself in, and Mrs Gandhi's public postures seemed more and more to portend a crackdown on dissent and democracy. Nature added its annual contribution when devastating floods racked Orissa and Bihar, and drought crippled Rajasthan, West Bengal, Bihar and Gujarat.

Final Flourish: In Kashmir, the lion let out his last roar with the controversial Resettlement Bill, and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's death in September ended a significant chapter in Indian history. The Sheikh's funeral, and the outpouring of genuine grief that followed in Kashmir, showed how he had straddled the state like a colossus. But before breathing his last, with a superb sense of timing, the Sheikh had orchestrated the appointment of his son Farooq as his successor. Soon after his father's death, Farooq

RAGHU RAI



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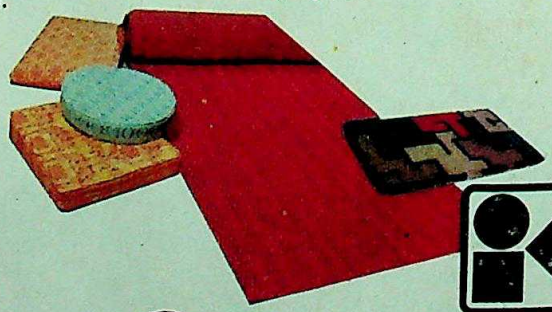

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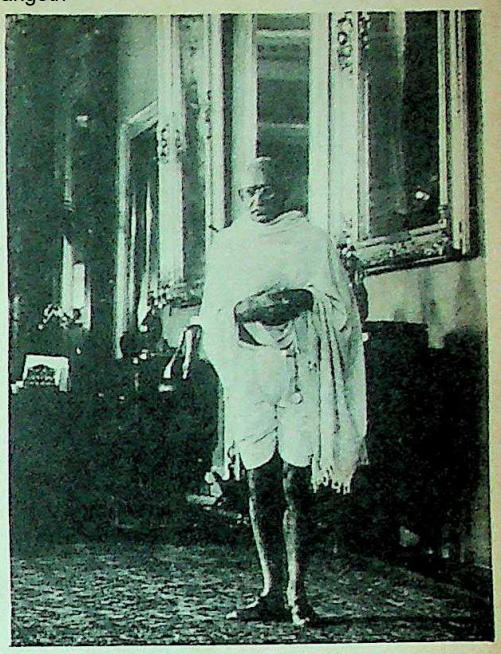


rprised critics who thought he would be a weak replacement by acking undesirable elements from his Cabinet and taking a firm tand on the Resettlement Bill.

At the opposite end of the country, another improbable eader was rising. In Andhra Pradesh, matinee idol N.T. Rama tao decided to cash in on his cinematic do-gooder image and lunged headlong into politics with his Telugu Desam party. Dra-ing huge crowds wherever he went, his strategy consisting of heatre more than anything else, he posed a major threat to the ongress(I) in one of its strongest states, threatening to follow in amil Nadu's actor-turned-Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran's ootsteps.

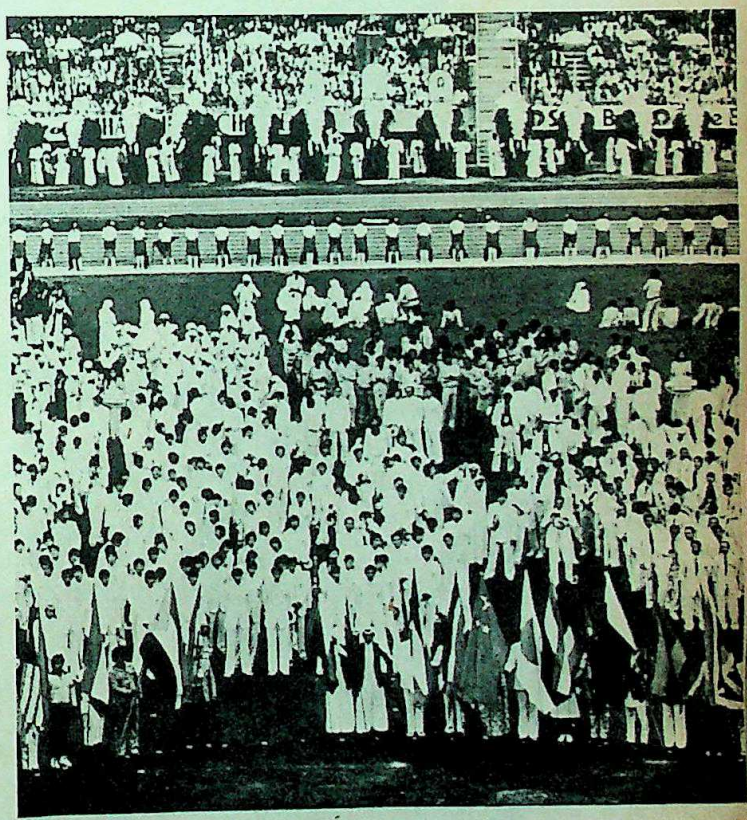
But the man of the moment was clearly the grand old man f Indian industry, J.R.D. Tata. India's first civil aviator proved hat at 78, the spirit of adventure that had pervaded his eventful ife was still very much alive. Strapped into a tiny, single-engined eopard Moth, similar to the one he flew to pioneer Indian avia-ion 50 years ago, JRD retraced his original route from Bombay Karachi and back, putting in almost 14 hours in the air, and a hero's welcome at the Juhu airstrip.

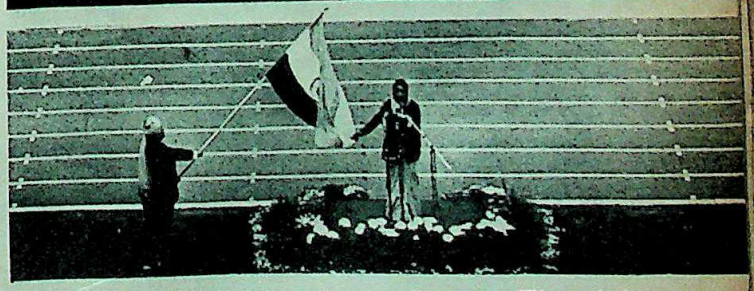
Bidding Farewell: In Moscow, however, it was a hero's fare-ell as President Leonid Brezhnev, the chief architect of Indo-oviet amity, passed into history. All over India, people were iven cause to remember another hero, a man whose values had lmost faded into oblivion. The making of the *Gandhi* film and the ontroversy it was accompanied by was succeeded by a orld-wide wave of glowing tributes to the three-hour-long oot and the man it portrayed.

While the people were about to rediscover one helmsman hrough a film, another died in Beijing, and the fumbling Opposition lost another towering figure in Promode Dasgupta, ecretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Happily, India notched up a creditable tally of medals in the Asian Games. But reality returned when Mrs Gandhi decided to o in for snap polls in three states. Close to the end of her third ear in power, the polls will serve as a litmus test of all that has one wrong—and right—in the year past. Mrs Gandhi's cam-aign speeches were full of angry outbursts against her oppo-ents, and rhetoric and invective seemed to overshadow policies nd performance. It was not a cheerful start for the new year, nd promised tumult and confusion in 1983.

—DILIP BOBB and CHAITANYA KALBAG





Mrs Gandhi bids farewell to Zia-ul-Haq and family (top left); Ben Kingsley as Gandhi; and the spectacular opening ceremony of the Asiad

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IAN SOCIETY

An Unromantic Journey

INDIA in the 1980s is riddled with riddles; trapped in hundreds of confusions and contradictions. The endless echoes that the old and kind and foolish Mrs Moore of E.M. Forster's *Passage to India* heard in the Marabar caves are memorable. "Nothing embraces the whole of India, nothing, nothing..." wrote Forster, "that was Akbar's mis-e." It was also the mistake of the British. And it is the ta of Indira Gandhi.

What are we going through? The hollowing of India? Or the oing of India? The modernization of India or the pauperi-tion of one-half of the Indian people? The greening of India or graying of India? Endless tangles of conflicts. Pervasive clash interests. But little clash of s and intellects.

In a world of fast, un-anced and rudderless ange, what is happening ar after year is the maturing India: the slow and painful nergence of a giant that is arning to step out of his-ry's binds of despair to the opeful blips of the future. he tunnel is long, and dimly t. But the bulbs are not all ak. And as the journey es on, the light gets ighter.

Slow Growth: Indians are love with the impossible. hey want a magic wand that ill transform a still semi-udal land of 700 million eople into a reasonably well-do, highly efficient, ethical-ound, morally strong and lessly egalitarian state in e twinkle of 50 years. But dians are also pragmatic nd resigned to the possible. he national debate in India in the '80s therefore is about how tle is too much and how much is too little. The economic cake small. It is sentenced to eternally slow growth. But more ian need slices, some ask for very big ones. Luckily, age and ithmetic count for little in the Indian design of growth and hange. The poor—300 million of them—are no threat to the uralist democratic order in India. Orissa is one of the poorest ates but also the quietest. The richest state is Punjab where no ore than 20 per cent of the local people can be said to be poor. nd it is Punjab that is in turmoil, the Sikhs asking not only for larger slice of the economic cake but also a larger state of their wn.

The maturing of India is a process of fascinating, breath-king historical change: the emergence of a docile, pliant, bmissive and easily yielding people to a self-aware, assertive manity, steadily learning to take their future into their own nds. The process is not limpid. Nor is it as obscure as many us believe it is. Columnist Arun Shourie showed in an article written on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of India's independence how the poor, illiterate voter has thrown out two-thirds of the sitting legislators seeking re-election in successive polls since 1967. If the eye focusses only on the venal acts of the men and women in power and their satraps or if it only looks for defiant acts of heroic rebels, then it is easy to be caught in the coils of despair. But, as Shourie rightly stressed, the focus must be on the "myriad acts of myriad individuals, the state of mind of these individuals". And he came to the heartening conclusion: there is a lot in India that should burn people with outrage. But there is little cause for pessimism or despair.

Toward the end of 1982, a distinguished Indian economist who has migrated to the ivy-laced towers of Oxford asked his countrymen, or rather the elite, to "feel some anger and outrage" because so many millions of Indians still did not get enough to eat. The press and the elite shrugged off Professor Amartya Sen's lucidly learned lecture. For, as Albert Camus wrote many years ago, in a democracy everyone is guilty for whatever goes grievously wrong. Every Indian who eats and lives well is guilty of denying enough food to 300 million of his countrymen. But this is inevitable in the model of development Indians have chosen for themselves. In the last 15 years, wrote J.D. Sethi, member of the Planning Commission during the Janata Party rule, "a decisive shift has taken place from mixed economy socialism to mixed economy capitalism, the emphasis remaining on 'mixed'."

In a world of fast, unbalanced and rudderless change, what is happening year after year is the maturing of India: the slow and painful emergence of a giant that is learning to step out of history's binds of despair to the hopeful blips of the future. The tunnel is long, and dimly lit. But the bulbs are not all weak. And as the journey goes on, the light gets brighter.

The model's achievements have been far from skimpy. It's not just that 400 million human beings—more than the entire population of Africa—have been lifted above the poverty line. It has created a middle class that is probably 140 million strong, comprising some 20 per cent of the population, by far the largest in any Third World country. It is not a uniform cohesive middle class but divided by language, caste and economic disparities. However, this large middle class community is gradually adopting similar life-style and values and is being steadily woven together by webs of communication, trade and commerce, and economic development. This middle class is no longer tied to a single political party; indeed, its political loyalties are drifting and shifting. At the same time, it remains committed to the Indian model of pluralistic democracy according to several recent studies. It is a middle class that is prone to discarding western ideologies including Marxism Leninism. Its concept of democracy is also getting increasingly differentiated from western or American concepts and values And becoming distinctly, though confusedly, Indian.

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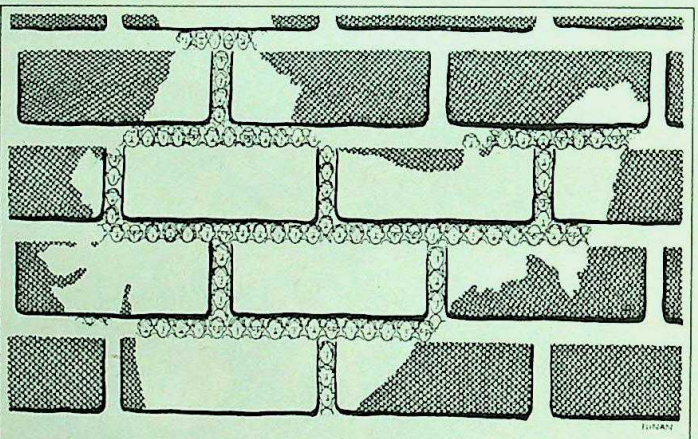
Caste Importance: Indeed, the Indian system of democracy is looking for its own road to equality and social justice which, when found, will make it very different from western and American models. The Mandal Commission's report, which was placed before Parliament in 1982, places caste at the centre of Indian society, picking it up as the basic unit in all considerations of distributive justice. The acclaim with which Parliament greeted the report has a moral impulse behind it. This impulse, says André Betelle, noted sociologist and a veteran scholar of the interplay of caste and class in India, is the commission's "commitment to equality". Adds he: "Indians today seem to be ready to do anything in the cause of equality, even to rehabilitate the caste system, and this is the case with all political parties and with intellectuals as well as politicians."

Indians are also beginning to discover hitherto unknown vitality, strength and dynamism in their traditional social structure and values. A very large community of entrepreneurs—the national bourgeoisie, in Marxist terms—has been created in India—15 lakh, according to one leading economist. Once again, a diversified group of considerable economic inequalities, and not exactly studded with overachievers. But a group whose primary interest lies in the unity and integrity of India, and which forms a strong limb of the national-integrative superstructure, the others being the bureaucracy, the military, the fast increasing managerial elite, the national press, the universities and research institutes, the scientific and technological laboratories and, last but not the least, the political parties. A massive army of medium and small entrepreneurs is struggling to climb up the ladder to link up with the national bourgeoisie.



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A GALAXY of western experts—from Weber to Myrdal—has constructed a proposition, widely echoed by Indians, that the "spirit" or "culture" of India's traditional institutions is hostile to true capitalist enterprise. This proposition stands totally flawed by the example of the Marwaris as well as the entrepreneurship that has flourished in Gujarat among the Vaishnav and Jain *bania* castes. At the root of the Marwari success in trade and business, and in recent decades in industrial enterprise, lies the strong ties of kin and community. Makrand Mehta, an Ahmedabad-based economist, has shown that the conversion of commercial entrepreneurship into industrial entrepreneurship in Gujarat has been made possible largely by the social and economic support given by traditional institutions of caste and religion. In fact, entrepreneurship has been slow and halting in those states where caste and religious support base for industrial enterprise has been distinctively lacking. West Bengal, Orissa and Assam are ready-at-hand examples.

Similarly, a cohesive relationship between Indian democracy and the caste structure of Indian society has given the country the political stability it can proudly flaunt at a world loaded with shaky political orders. All over the country, dominant castes emerged as the ruling elite either singly or in coalition with another, but everywhere these dominant groups have added weaker castes and passed on to them a share of the rewards cake. Jayant Lele, a Canada-based sociologist, has shown the Marathas, who are the dominant caste in Maharashtra, 40 per cent of the population, have in the last three decades co-opted various other weaker social groups and provided state with enviable political stability and social cohesion. observers of the Indian scene, says Lele, fail to understand what sophistication "formal democratic structures are made by rural politicians in India". Grass root leadership studies that political leadership from the panchayat to the state has passed firmly into the grasp of intermediate propertied These castes have tried to coalesce with weaker sections political power. In doing so not only have they greatly cised the weaker castes and elements but have also been to share resource and power with them, however unequally.

Participation: These great changes in Indian so brought about by the process of pluralistic democracy and "mixed-capital development, explain the blems the political have been facing since the '60s. It is completely wrong say, as Ved Mehta has that Indian politics is by large a "family affair". On contrary, hundreds of sands of people now participate in the governing the country and hundreds millions in the political cess. The vastly expanded middle class, the ever-emerging rural elite, and the politicised masses constitute massive and diversified constituency too large and complex for any party to manipulate and trol. Lack of inner democracy in the political parties, pecially the Congress(I), alienated them from large tions of the rural elite the urban-rural voter. Politics has become highly competitive the local level, creating an apparently disturbing dichotomy ween a "strong" regime at the Centre and "weak' governments the states. The most distressed political animals in India are chief ministers of states ruled by Congress(I). Insecurity power of chief ministers and ministers has encouraged corruption and abuse of power, and the weakening of the popular support base of political parties has made them dependent on the the urban-rural lumpen elements and black money to win tions. In short, the party system devised before Independence being found increasingly unequal to the changes that have curred in Indian society.

This and other ills of the political system, daily bemoaned the press, do not, however, strike at the democratic system radicalise the electorate. In other words, the political parties in a state of decay, not India's democracy. Indeed, along with well-known myriad weaknesses and ailments, the Indian system has acquired certain strengths not to be found in any other T

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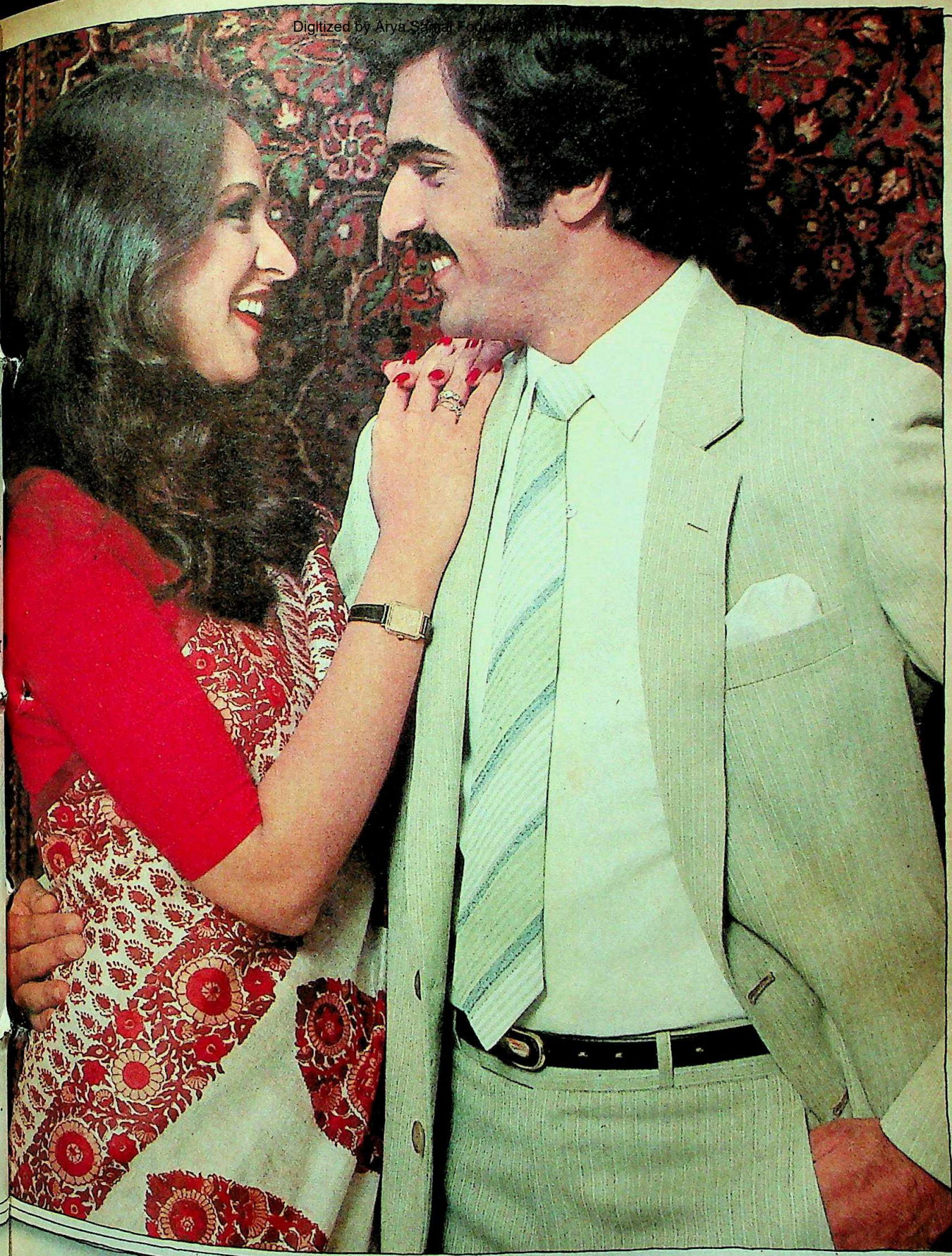

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World nation. By not disturbing the caste structure or distorting it too rapidly, it has kept intact the old, time-tested infrastructure of social and political stability. It is this infrastructure that has kept extremist leftist movements weak, fragmented and confined to regional limits. Even in Kerala, where the communist movement was once the predominant political force, it is now tamed by and chained to the caste and denomination structure. The "socialist" parties died in 1982, unlamented, even largely unnoticed. Indian politicians and academics who disagree on almost everything, seem to agree on this one point: that no system other than pluralistic democracy can work in this vast and diversified land.

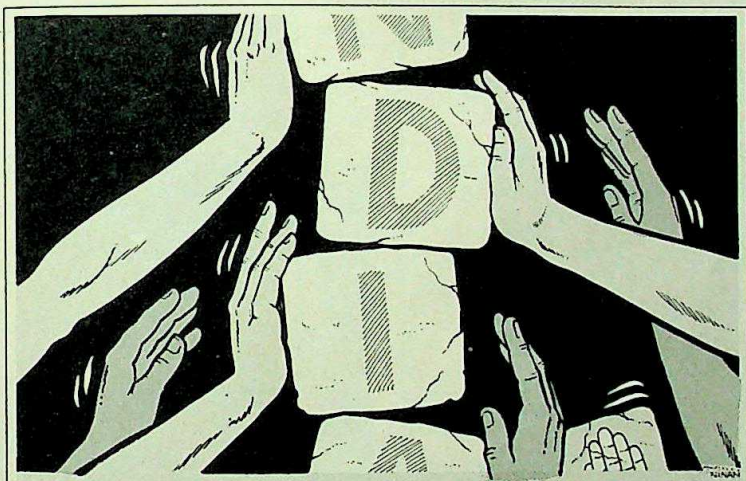
Indian democracy has not proved itself to be a great performer; a people that remained non-achieving for centuries just cannot become great achievers overnight. Even then, for low achievement and a general tendency to remain satisfied with 60 per cent implementation of the plans, bureaucratic controls and inertia are admittedly very largely responsible. Relaxation of controls increased economic achievements in 1982 and may well do the same in 1983.

GROWTH has been slow. But it has been achieved mainly by the country's own effort. The result is that India is self-supporting in 90 per cent of its needs and requirements. More important, its aloofness from the world economy, in which it plays only an insignificant role, has earned it a large measure of immunity from world booms as well as world dooms. The world recession of 1981-82 has not affected India visibly, although symptoms of recession have erupted in sectors of the industrial economy. The economic blizzards in the west, India cannot completely escape, but it is in a far stronger position to withstand the icy blasts than countries as big and as once-doing-well as Mexico and Brazil. From western commercial banks aone, Mexico has borrowed $70 billion (Rs 66,500 crore) and Brazil $50 billion (Rs 47,500 crore), and both have defaulted in repayment of debts. This has created an unprecedented crisis in the western banking system, pushing several banks to the brink of collapse. (The total loans given by these banks to Third World countries stood in 1982 at the staggering figure of $500 billion (Rs 475,000 crore), up-up-and-up from $96.8 billion (Rs 92,000 crore) in 1973! India is so far free from this kind of a burden; the $17 billion (Rs 16,150 crore) debt burden it carries on its shoulders is mainly owed to international financial insitutions. Nor is there a possibility that the country will soon be overtaken by foreign capital. The multinationals are not coming. In fact, some of them are winding up their operations in India because of the world recession. There has already been a small flight of multinational capital.

Brazil recently agreed to toe the Reagan Administration line in Central America for no more than a mess of $3 billion (Rs 2,850 crore) loaned by the US Government. Even American newspapers said that the rulers of Brazil agreed to make it a "banana republic". This sort of thing cannot happen to India. No matter who rules in Delhi, India will not sell its independence for any amount of dollars.

Increasing Conflict: Of course, neither the present nor the immediate future will be smooth sailing for Indian democracy. Highly competitive politics, shrinking economy, and decay of the present party system signal increasing conflict at many levels, often violent. The people and the raj are meeting each other at a million points, whereas, as William Norris-Jones has pointed out, for many centuries before Independence, there was no meeting ground in India between government and society. The current meeting points are a mix of cooperation and conflict, each demanding of the other what it is unable or unwilling to give. The conflicts are not so much between the haves and have-nots as among haves and between less-haves and more-haves.

The conflicts and even the violence are, however, aimed not against the system but to get out of the system larger slices of political power or economic rewards. They are part of an abrasive process of communication that characterises most political systems today. While straining the timbre of the system, conflicts also expand its capacity to adopt new interest groups and weaker sections of the society and to adapt itself to change. Economic analyst Prem Shankar Jha recently probed the cause of the rising incidence of communal violence and came to the conclusion that "today's communal conflict is anything but communal. On the contrary, much of it is an integral part of the sharpening political conflict in the country."



The prognosis at the dawn of 1983, is that in spite of numerous problems and pressures, democracy in India is not in danger. In the foreseeable future, India is bereft of charismatic leadership. The political forces will then work out appropriate realignments to give the country a government that will be more down to earth and a reconstructed party system more rooted to the traditional institutions and values of Indian society.

The prognosis at the dawn of 1983, therefore, is that in spite of numerous problems and pressures, democracy in India is not in danger. In the foreseeable future, India is bereft of charismatic leadership. The political forces will then work out appropriate realignments to give the country a government that will be more down to earth and a reconstructed party system more rooted to the traditional institutions and values of Indian society. The human freedoms and dignities which Indians enjoy have become a rare privilege in the Third World. These are also the only asset of 40 per cent of the Indian people who have no economic assets at all. If the poor cannot organise and struggle freely for their self-advancement, they can never hope to lose their chains.

India has never caught the romantic imagination of the world because the soil of India has given no hospitality to revolutionary romanticism. Unlike China's, India's journey has been prosaic, arousing no great waves of hope either at home or in the rest of the world. And unlike China, India has caused no great disappointment either at home or in powerful foreign capitals. It has been a slow halting unromantic journey and so shall it remain.

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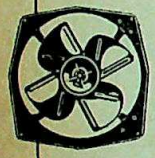

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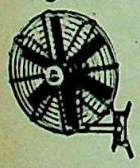

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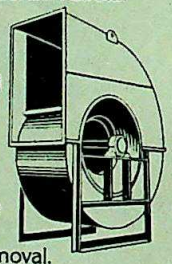

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INDIA TODAY,

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Future Shock

FOR THE piece of unreal estate that has one-sixth of humanity as its inhabitants, 1983 was the year when it all happened. Three years earlier, after the massive power-cut imposed by the Janata in 1977–80, Indira Gandhi had re-stormed their citadel to return triumphantly to 1 Safdarjung Road as the darling of the masses. But as the dawn broke on the early days of the new year it was a former darling of another kind who raised the curtain on a pioneering political breakthrough.

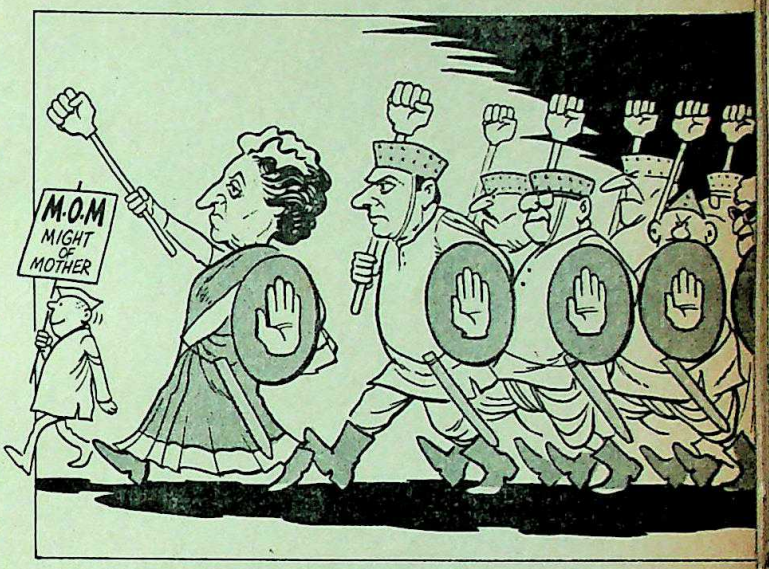
Maneka Gandhi, flexing her political muscle after nine months of regular exercises, launched India's most absorbing round of party games by replacing her Sanjay Vichar Manch with an unlimited company called DAD, short for Dissidents and Defectors. Maneka's consultants were renowned horse-trader Charan Singh, who only weeks earlier had announced his retirement from passive politics for the fifth time, and Abdul Rehman Antulay, who by virtue of his trustworthy nature, and his vast and proven managerial and financial talents was just ideal for the job.

Moving swifty in a seller's market, DAD established a total monopoly in the burgeoning trade. Its denture issue was lapped up

by prospective clients and it was quickly short-listed on the country's stock exchanges, where its shares, predictably, were soon being traded on the black market, competing with bearer bonds for premium.

Fast-selling Commodity: DAD's corporate strategy was simple but effective. Anticipating a heavy demand for dissidents and defectors in the 1985 general election, they unobtrusively bought up all the available stock, particularly in Maharashtra, Bihar, Gujarat and Haryana, where it was in plentiful supply, and locked them up in a palace rented from Vijaya Raje Scindia of Gwalior. They then released small quantities into the market during the state assembly elections at fabulously inflated prices charging almost 10 times what they had paid for the product.

The going price, according to inside sources, was Rs 4 lakh per dissident and Rs 6 lakh per defector in prime condition, along with a guarantee certificate that the commodity in question would not switch loyalties for at least one week. A 10 per cent premium on basic price was charged if the guaranteed period was extended to two weeks, but DAD was unable to guarantee the purity of its product any further. Bulk orders, however, earned a 10 per cent rebate while



regular clients like Bhajan Lal received an armed guard free wit every consignment ordered.

After DAD rented the Purana Quila from the Delh Development Authority as a warehouse for its stock, Mrs Gandh decided that something had to be done. So a new organisation calle Might Of Mother (MOM) was formed overnight, with the blessing of President Zail Singh. MOM's army, as opposed to DAD's army was composed of those who had been with the prime ministe through all her trying times, right from kindergarten to finishin school in Switzerland to Oxford to the years of power. The stage wa set for a pitched battle, which eventually took place in the stadia pu in shrouds after the Asian Games.

Party Games: The fight was hard and bitter. The Jawaharla Nehru Stadium witnessed a slanging match in pitch darkness afte the Akalis shot-circuited the lighting towers with their kirpans. Tw groups of warriors chased each other round the velodrome on the respective symbols—bicycles and elephants. The Indraprashth Indoor Stadium drew the largest crowds: with chairs set as i Parliament, players had to cross the floor in the fastest time possibl The record was established by an MLA from Haryana who did it i

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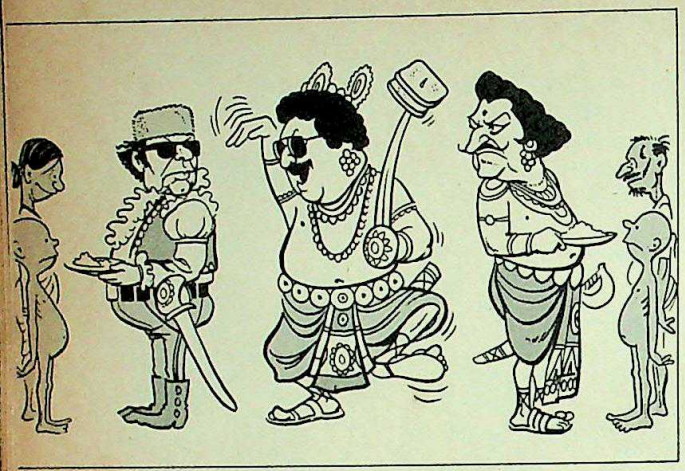


1.02 seconds. Unfortunately, no one could tell to which side he belonged.

While the games continued, the hoteliers were making hay. After the Asiad, they had been left with 5,864 rooms and about 5,864 customers. Naturally, the MOM-DAD battle was a godsend with nearly all the politicians in the country clamouring for rooms. One enterprising hotelier in the capital, caught slightly off-guard by the influx, converted his unfinished building into a show-piece by putting all the politicians into rooms with just three walls—spectators in the street had an unobstructed view of their favourites sleeping, talking and preparing for next day's games.

After the games were over, the Government put on another show for the capital's citizens by hosting the non-aligned meet. About 90 heads of state were housed in the Asian Games Village and the centre of attraction was the village discotheque. Pakistan's Zia could be seen doing the Simla Shake with Mrs Gandhi. The Iran and Iraq delegations held hands and danced the Mullah Mingle. The two gatecrashing Kampuchean delegations pursued each other round and round the floor in their variation of the Khmer Rouge Rumba. The Khalistan delegation which sought to get observer status at the disco party was sent packing in a variation of the Lathi Charge.

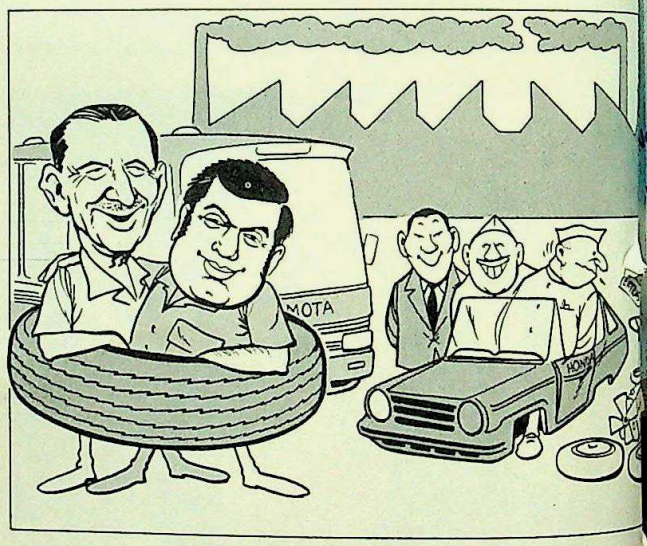
The Congress(I), its new managerial culture passing with success the acid test of organising the non-aligned meet and, later, the Commonwealth conference in Goa, decided to take over the Doon School—it already held a 40 per cent share in it—and train successive generations of Doon goons to staff its MP/MLA platoons.

Political Moves: Even as the Gandhis were making the Government work, lady-in-waiting Maneka Gandhi received a setback when a letter she had written to a kindergarten friend when she was three years old was leaked to the press. In the letter, she confided that she wasn't fond of girlish toys like dolls but preferred model cars and planes. Media commentators deduced that from early age Maneka had made up her mind to become part of Gandhi household.

But elsewhere, politicians were going strong. On the heels of midday meal scheme, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MGR introduced a midnight meal scheme for insomniacs. In neighbouring Karnataka Chief Minister R. Gundu Rao, after watching enviously the success of NTR and MGR across the border, went off to the Pune Film Institute, shortening his name to RGR.

In the north, Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's 'Clean Kashmir' drive snowballed and Srinagar found itself cut off from the rest of the country because all the dirt clogged the Banihal Pass. As Farooq had earlier banned the RSS (Rashtriya Sweeper Sangh) no one could clear the pass. In Bihar, things were worse the bill. Jagannath Mishra pushed it through with many amendments in punctuation and spelling and locked all the journalists up, releasing all the criminals in the process. This immediately doubled his party's strength in the Assembly.

Mishra was also involved in the curious case of the Railway Ministry. A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury put the entire ministry



a train and set off for Malda. The new railway board chairman, hearing of this, switched all signals in the state to red, thus stopping Choudhury in his tracks. Mishra, sensing a good deal, offered Choudhury, the train and the ministry to Swami Dhirendra Brahmachari as collateral for an undisclosed sum.

Big Business: Brahmachari, in fact, was making waves as a businessman. He sold his flourishing gun-and-ammunition factory to a group of Canadian Sikhs, and bought the floundering Vayudoot with the money. He then set up an air-taxi service from various states to New Delhi and made a packet by ferrying chief ministers and their flunkeys to and fro. His biggest customers were MOM and DAD.

Two new corporations came into being in 1983. With take-overs very much in the air, the Tatas and Modis launched an unobtrusive buying spree which proved so unobtrusive that they ended up buying each other's companies resulting in the formation of MOTA. A stunning coup where Bombay Dyeing bought up Reliance Textiles, resulting in the birth of a new textile conglomerate, BORE.

The Suzuki deal, however, turned out to be a non-starter. Instead, Maruti board member Arun Nehru told Parliament that Honda had offered to make a "people's car" for Rs 9,999.99, one-fourth Suzuki's price. What he conveniently omitted to mention was that the car would also be one-fourth the Suzuki's size and would

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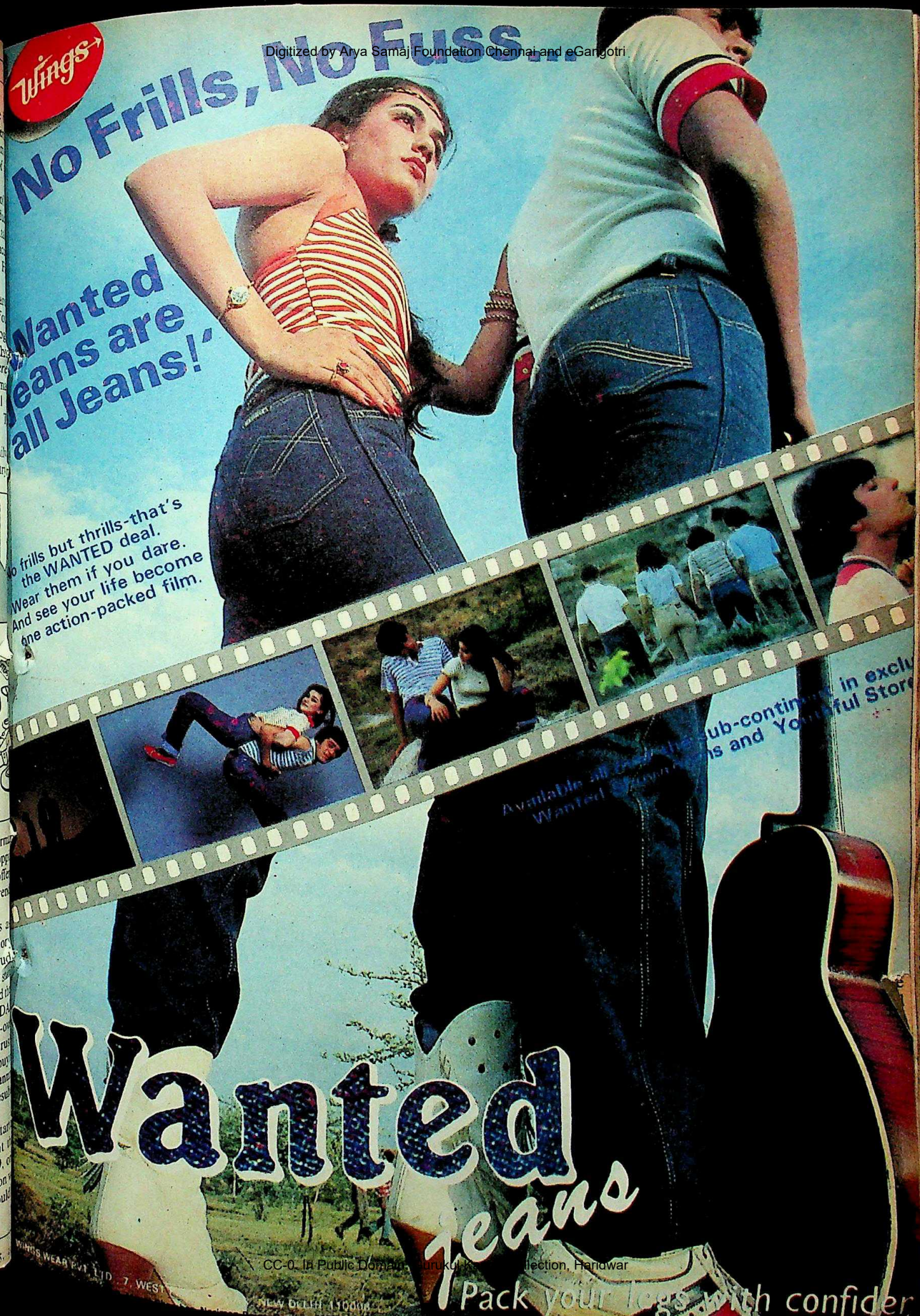

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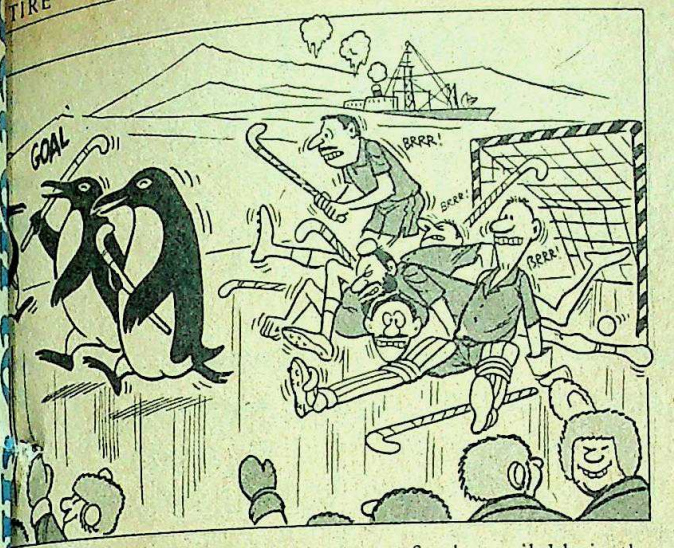


wered by the Honda portable generators freely available in the ck market. This information was blazoned on the last page by the *nday Telegraph*, the new business magazine started by Saroj enka, which also disclosed that luxury features such as wheels, ering columns, windshields and so on would be listed as extras.

Media Success: It was a good year for the media. Crusading rnalist Arun Shourie tracked down a missing file, which Mrs ndhi had left on her table while trimming her nails. Shourie llowed the trail of nail-clippings to Rajiv's office. The letters P-20 the file actually stood for Programme-20, Mrs Gandhi's secret w 20-point programme. Shourie detailed all this in a devastating d crisply written thriller titled *Of Cabinets and Their Files* serialised r six months in *The Times Of India*.

For his efforts, Shourie received the *Indian Express* award rted by Ramnath Goenka for which all former editors of the paper re eligible. In heartfelt gratitude, Shourie wrote a letter in *Surya dia*, thanking Ramnathji for the award and another to *Express* itor B.G. Verghese telling him that he could now afford that mestic gobar gas plant Verghese had been pressing him to buy in editorials.

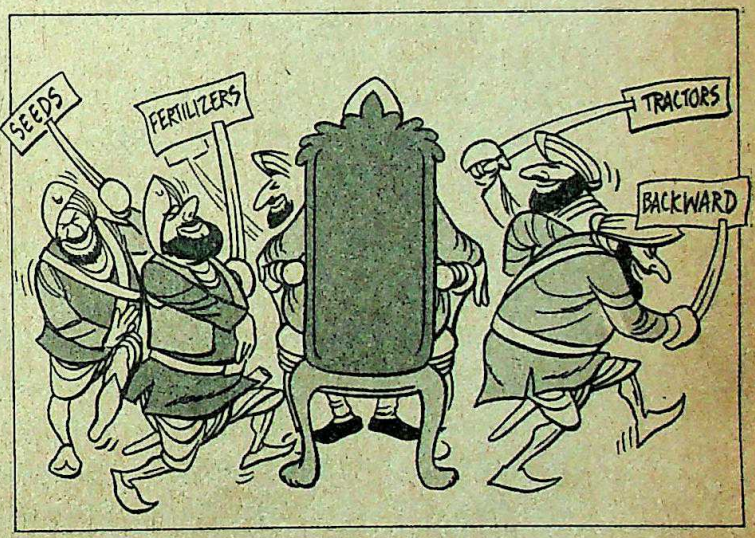
Sports was a bad word in 1983. The Sports Ministry, having rked out that the Indian hockey team played best the furthest ay from India, organised an invitation tournament in Antarctica, astroice laid there by the third Antarctica Expedition. No one pted the invitation and the Indian team ended up playing a group penguins in the finals and lost 1-8. That was when the ministry ked for a national sports alternative and found it in kabaddi.

Amitabh Bachchan, MP, became the head of the Special Organising Committee for Kabaddi (SOCK), and coined the new game's slogan 'Sock it to 'em'.

Clever Compromise: Meanwhile, the Akalis had stepped up their demands. They now demanded that Punjab be declared a backward state and all seeds, fertilisers and tractors be supplied free. President Zail Singh invited the leaders to tea at Rashtrapati Bhavan, and once inside they seized the building declaring it an essential part of Sikh history. They also declared they would hold Zail Singh hostage until their demands were met. Zail Singh, on his part, was only too happy to be back in political action and offered the Akalis permanent accommodation in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Eventually, a clever compromise was arrived at. As the Government had no justification for declaring the most prosperous state in the country backward, it was decided that for the Sikhs to qualify for that tag the entire population of Punjab would shift to Assam and vice-versa. The Assamese, who according to their own figures, now numbered only about 10,000, were only too willing to comply as the talks had ended up with everybody losing his voice.

And what of the Opposition? Things looked pretty grim. A census conducted by the Election Commission showed that there were as many as 52 opposition parties, each in the process of splitting. The commission was forced to issue a directory of political parties



which resembled the Delhi telephone directory. The entries ranged from L.K. Advani's Janata(A) A.B. Vajpayee's Janata(V). With Delhi telephones what they are, the opposition leaders spent the greater part of the year trying to get each other on the phone and the unity talks couldn't even get off the ground.

Failed Leader: In fact, the only glimmer of hope for the Opposition had come early in the year with the success of Attenborough's *Gandhi*. With the coming of Ben Kingsley, the opposition parties thought they had found their messiah and rallied to his cause. However, Kingsley was out of the reckoning when he was offered a lead role in Ramesh Sippy's newest blockbuster, *Blockbuster*.

With Kingsley removed from the scene, Mrs Gandhi could contemplate a horizon free of national alternatives. On New Year's Eve, 1983, she addressed the nation from the ramparts of the Qutab Minar: "'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe. All mimsy were the borogoves, and the move raths outgrabe." Mrs Gandhi concluded her exhortation to national unity by saying that "at the stroke of the midnight hour, India will awake to a new don." And when 1984 is ushered in, she finished, "Big sister will be watching."

—DILIP BOBB and JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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HARD FACTS ABOUT POLYESTER TEXTURISING AND FILAMENT YARN SPINNING INDUSTRIES

1) The Spinners of Polyester Partially Oriented Yarn (POY) and Polyester Filament Yarn (PFY) have matching captive texturising capacities. Hence Independant texturisers (about 150) are dependant on the continuance of the Open General Licence Policy with reasonable rates of protective customs duties for their very survival. **The 305.18% average protective duty (Rs. 15,000 per tonne was increased effective 23-11-1982) levied on POY/PFY is the highest protective duty ever levied on any commodity in India.**

2) The average aggregate customs duties on 150D and 75D POY works out to 750% advalorem; *making POY the highest taxed industrial raw material in the world.*

3) The total incidence of taxation (including texturising duty and sales tax) as a percentage of the CIF price of 75D and 150D POY works out to 822.62% and 826.68% respectively, **making smuggling of texturised yarns several times more lucrative than gold, watches, electronic items. The only industrial raw material being smuggled in container-loads, and setting at nought the implementation of Point number 19 of the 20-Point programme.**

4) On the imports of POY/PFY yarns which cost around Rs. 32 crores per annum on imports of 20,000 tonnes, the texturisers contributed, Rs. 225 crores as import duties alone. *Now the texturisers already low production would decline by 50% as a result of the recent hike whereas the customs revenue will fall by Rs. 112 crores whilst seriously injuring texturisers, weavers, knitters and the common man-the ultimate consumer.*

5) Out of 10 POY/PFY Spinners, 8 are MRTP Houses. Their 1981 capacity utilisation was 160% as against only 60% of the texturising industry which is in the small/medium scale sector. **A glaring fact totally ignored by the government while hiking the obnoxious duty.**

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6) The import cost of POY/PFY becoming more prohibitive for texturisers, the Spinner-texturisers will have a complete monopoly on the sale of all texturised yarns in the country. *A unique case of the weaker section subsidising the rich.*

7) The recent hike in import duty will distort competition between Spinner-texturisers and independant texturisers, thereby imposing on all consumers unjustifed costs or restrictions. **This tant-amounts to a restrictive Trade Practice under the MRTP Act–unwittingly encouraged by the government.**

8) The Spinning Industry registered, during 1981-82, growth in PAT (Profit after tax) as high as 41% compared to 1980-81 whereas cotton textiles industry had a negative PAT of 24%. *The cotton Textile Industry is a bulk consumer of texturised yarns whereas protective duty is enhanced to further protect the over-protected.*

9) The Retained Profits of the Spinners increased by 59.6% and the rate of growth of the cash flow was 41.1%. A higher customs duty was highly irrational by all norms. **Effective 23-11-1982 their current fantastic profits will further soar by Rs. 52.50 crores per annum.**

10) Thanks to a restrictive industrial licensing policy coupled with highest tariff barriers being followed by the government, at the behest of a handful of Spinners — the rate of return to the Spinners is highest in the world when India's production of POY/PFY is 0.67% of the world's production. *The small - medium scale texturising industry will, however, be added to the list of sick industries resulting in locking up of the finances advanced by Banks/Financial Institutions.*

11) The incidences of import duties on the basic raw materials of the spinners did not warrant a corresponding protective duty on POY/-PFY higher than 89.3% against prevalent rate of 305.18%. **Government has fallen prey to the evil designs of the Spinners and unwittingly to the smugglers.**

12) A logical and rational case exists not only to withdraw the hike in customs duty of Rs. 15 per kg but to reduce the protective duty to a maximum of 110% advalorem. **Please help us and not kill us.**

ALL INDIA CRIMPERS' ASSOCIATION
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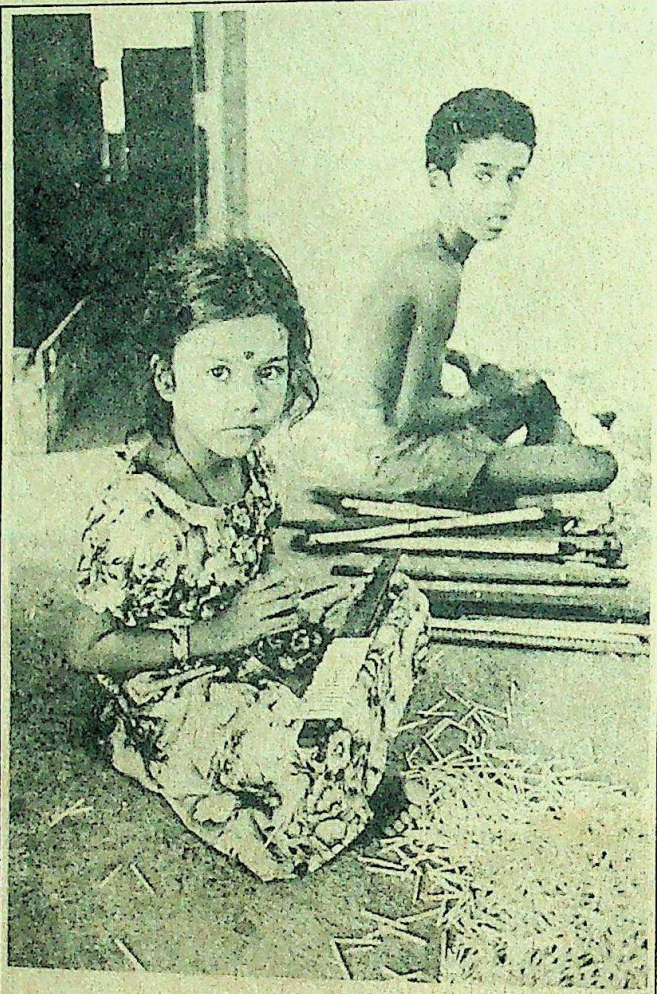
SIVAKASI

Exploiting The Young

IN 1976, when Tamil Nadu was under President's Rule, the Central Government set up the Harbans Singh Commission to investigate the "problem of child labour in various factories and industries in Ramanathapuram district". The report was submitted in 1977, but has not so far been made public. In February last year, when a fireworks factory near Sivakasi town—the centre of the nation's handmade match and fireworks industry—went up in flames, killing six children, SMITU KOTHARI *of the People's Union for Civil Liberties decided to investigate the continuing social evil of child labour in and around Sivakasi. Successfully obtaining a rare copy of the Harbans Singh report, he managed to enter villages and factories and talk to factory owners, foremen, government officials and the child workers themselves. His report:*

PICTURES BY SMITU KOTHARI



"We prefer child labour. Children work faster, work longer hours and are more dependable."

—Foreman, standard Fireworks

DOWN the long hall, lit patchily by sunlight coming in through open windows, sat row upon row of children, almost 250 of them, all of them around 10 years of age, all immersed in their work. In front of each one of them lay a small mountain of headless matchsticks, and the children's hands flew from those piles to frames they balanced on their laps, inserting each matchstick painstakingly into its slot in the frame. There was obviously pressure to fill each frame fast, for the children never looked up. Even at 'lunchtime', as their right hands unconsciously pecked at the food they had brought from home, their left hands mechanically continued to insert matchsticks in the frames. On every face was an expression of utter blankness, masks on an army of child robots.

This was 'D' unit of the Standard Match Industries at the Madathupatti village crossing, not very far from Sivakasi, a small municipal town in Tamil Nadu's Ramanathapuram district, only one of the hundreds in the region, a cog in the wheel of the huge handmade match industry. Sivakasi is also famous for the fireworks it produces, and in the cracker factories, too, most of the workers are children, some above 14 years of age, but a lot below. Standard Fireworks, for instance, has 12 units spread in the taluk, each employing between 100 and 300 people; at the Tayyalpatti village un foreman says: "We prefe labour. Children work work longer hours an more dependable."

The world's largest c tration of child labour w the Sivakasi units. Out of tal population of 100,000 kers in the match and fi industries, the child wor pulation is around 45,00 children, most of them neighbouring villages, w ther in small cottage u their own villages or are ght into Sivakasi town by nised transport.

Long Hours: Betw and 5 every morning, c in villages as far as 30 km are rudely woken up by parents, handed a small packet, and bundled into or vans belonging to the owners. Each of these has an agent who children, and who ensure the children are awake the transport arrives in th dawn darkness. Each age a monthly salary of Rs and parents are offered a ry advance' of Rs 200 for child they pledge to the ries. Late in the evening ween 6 and 9 p.m., the ch are dropped back to the lages after they have put 12-hour day, with no relax periods.

An estimated 44 per of the child workers are the age of 15. Legally, child has to possess a d certificate clearing him for employment, but such ficates can always be ob for a consideration. Girls number boys in every fa for they are considered more dex working at filling match frames, m matchboxes, counting sticks, or p labels, while in the fireworks factories dye newsprint with the distinctive r the crackers, roll gunpowder, and pa the final product.

Most of these children have been to school, and childhood and

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alien concepts to them, their lives sha- dangerously with chemicals and no- us fumes, dust from chemical powder the heat of the boiler rooms. The unger children, between four and seven ars, earn about Rs 2 a day this unending work—there no days off—and the older ldren earn a maximum of Rs day.

The seurity arrangements every small-scale and cottage tory are elaborate. Visitors stopped at the gate, and by e entrance is gained into factories, the children have n whisked away to nearby ds or hidden in the large sto- e sheds. Most match or fire- rks units are owned by Na- r families, and each owner is a mber of the Sivakasi Chamber Match Industries (SCMI).

Conducted Tours: At the adathupatti factory, the fore- n constantly follows visitors ound the sheds, discouraging e children from speaking. The mmon argument is that the ldren are forced to work be- use of their parents' economic rivation. The cramped wor- ng conditions are clearly de- mental to the children's alth and mental development; r are proper records of child rkers kept.

Although the SCMI resolved October 1976 not to employ ldren aged below 10 years, ost factories openly flout this derstanding. The Factories , 1948, stipulates that no d below the age of 14 can employed as a worker. But administrative authority in vakasi has no powers to sus- nd the licences of industries olating the law. Except for eir statutory visits, factory ators never conduct sur- e checks except when there an accident—and in such cas- too, the defaulting factory is ck in production in a few ys.

In February last year, a cracker fac- y in Chellapathi village, 20 km from nkarankoil, went up in flames. Six chil- en were burnt to death in the fire; they d been stuffing gunpowder into fire- ckers when the accident occurred. A se was registered under the Indian Penal de and the Explosives Act, but enqui- es now show that no other effective action has been taken and the factory is back in production. Dozens of smaller accidents are common, but they are suppressed.

Precautions Flouted: At the Standard Fireworks unit at Tayyalpatti, safety precautions are maintained superficially, and in small sheds containing piles of gunpowder, where only four people can legally work, as many as eight children are at work making crackers. A pall of dust hangs over the compound in which the sheds are located; local doctors say there is a high incidence of respiratory diseases among children, but no systematic investigation has so far been undertaken. At the Tayyalpatti factory, late in the evening, one shed was lit by two lanterns. Work in fireworks factories is legally expected to stop at sundown, and the foreman said that the lanterns belonged to workers who had to walk long distances to their villages in the dark.

There is a strategy on the part of the state Government not to develop this area. Ultimately, children cannot be organised, so child labour favours the employers.

—U.G. Narainswamy Naidu, trade union leader

In September 1981, 32 persons, including six children, died when a massive explosion ripped apart a fireworks factory on the outskirts of Sivakasi. The factory owner's lawyer persuaded the dependents of the dead to accept lower compensations than were stipulated by law. Rukmani, 23, one of the victims' widows, says that the deputy labour commissioner told her to accept Rs 10,000—against the Rs 25,000 due to her—in the interests of avoiding a long legal battle. Investigations at that time showed that the workers were not given pay-slips, and wages invariably were below the minimum stipulated for such hazardous work.

CHELLATHAYA, Pannthaya and Muthu are three of the children working in the Thirupathi Match Works. Muthu had dropped out of school after a year; the other two had never been enrolled. Says Pannthaya: "My parents own some land, but cannot cultivate it. My older sister also works in a match unit, and the two of us support the family. My parents get only occasional work." Darman, the factory's foreman, defends the employment of children: "This is no job for an adult"; he is full of complaints about the plight of the cottage match industry. V. Alagirisami, who owns the Chellapandian Match Works in Ampatti village echoes these complaints. Says he: "There was no profit in agriculture, but there is no profit in the match industry either. My debts are mounting, the Government does not favour the cottage sector, and the competition from WIMCO (Western India Match Company) is killing us."

The handmade match sector today produces more matches than does WIMCO but WIMCO holds a total monopoly in the

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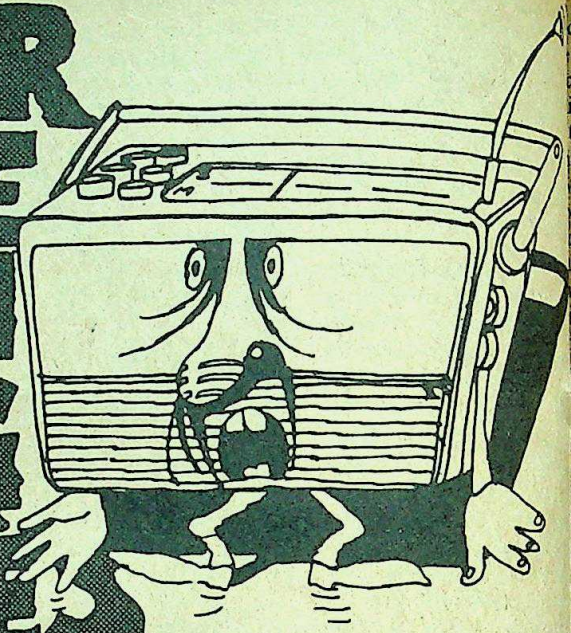
'I FEAR DAMAGE FROM LEAKING BATTERIES



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UNION CARBIDE

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chanised sector. In 1978, for instance, top 18 small-scale match groups pro-ced a total of 540 crore matchboxes, ile WIMCO produced a total of 432 crore tchboxes. Indirectly, however, the adi and Village Industries Commission IC) perpetuates the existence of child our in Sivakasi. The cottage sector's ncipal marketing agency, KVIC has done le about the low procurement prices. e cottage sector sells its matches at less n Rs 60 for a crate of 720 matchboxes, ile WIMCO, with its efficient country-de network, obtains twice the price for the same volume. Ironically, the KVIC was set up to provide employment for unemployed adults in the villages.

Although WIMCO continues to account for 25 per cent of the match industry's output, the small and cottage sectors were given vast benefits in 1979 by the Janata Government; excise duty on matches made in the cottage, small-scale, and large-scale sectors being pegged at Rs 1.60, Rs 4.50 and Rs 7.20 per gross respectively. These concessions resulted in a tenfold jump in small-scale match factories in Tamil Nadu. The small units are accused of using spurious band rolls (showing excise duty payment) and tax evasion, but physical verification has not been carried out. Simple machines costing Rs 1,000 have been designed to perform the frame-filling functions, but the small industry refuses to use them on the plea of generating employment.

Poorly Developed: Ramanathapuram is one of Tamil Nadu's least developed districts, its agricultural output ranking among the lowest in the state. Poor rainfall and scanty irrigation have led to a sharp and continuous drop in cultivated

LEGISLATION

Letter Of The Law

INDIA has the largest child labour force in the world. In 1971, there were over 10 million child labourers; the number has increased since then, but no precise estimate exists. The National Sample Survey (1972–73) cites a figure of 16.3 million child labourers in the age group 5–15. The Rural Labour Enquiry Committee calculates that an average ild is employed in the countryside for 280 days every year, and earns roughly half the adult wage.

The maximum exploitation of children as labourers takes place in the unorganised and informal sector. Child labour has increased sharply in all traditional handicraft industries like carpet-making, zari-making, brassware, precious stone polishing, leather tannery, bidi-making, bangle manufacture, and brick-making, apart from match and fireworks manufacture.

In Jammu and Kashmir, for instance, the carpet industry employs nearly 7,000 children between the ages of 8 and 10. They usually work for eight hours a day on a monthly wage of Rs 80, packed into sheds behind giant looms, the air thick with particles of fluff and wool. Nearly 60 per cent of these children suffer from asthma and tuberculosis. In the zari-making and precious stone polising industries, child labourers often suffer from serious eye diseases.

Constitutional Irregularities: There are almost 12 pieces of legislation in existence that deal with child labour in one form or another. Article 24 of the Constitution states: "No child shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment." The major statutes governing child labour are the Children (Pledging of Labour) Act, 1933; the Employment of Children Act, 1938; the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; and the Factories Act, 1948. Statutory protection of child labour began with the Indian Factories Act of 1881 which provided, among other things, that the minimum age for employment was seven years and work time was stipulated at nine hours.

In addition, Article 39 of the Directive Principles of State Policy states that the tender age of children should not be abused and citizens should not be forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age and strength, and that children should be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.

"No child shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment."

—Article 24, Constitution of India

A major criticism of child labour legislation has been that it lacks uniformity The various acts do not conform to a single agreed minimum age, which differs from Act to Act, state to state and industry to industry. The same anomalies exist in working hours, rest periods and night-employment rules.

Among other things, the Factories Act provides that only children who have completed their fourteenth year and have obtained a certificate of fitness can be employed; that the maximum number of working hours should be four and a half; that there should be proper ventilation and at least 500 cubic feet of work space for every child workers, as well as hygienic drinking water and sanitation facilities. Sections 35 and 36 of the Act provide that in fireworks factories no electric wiring should be present, and wooden slippers should be provided to prevent sparks that might ignite the sulphur chemicals. Asbestos overcoats and other safety items are meant to be provded.

In Sivakasi, however, most of the small match and fireworks units are not registered under the Factories Act; when they are, the employers do not maintain proper records or provide proper facilities or safety measures. Even those factories registered under the Factories Act violate its provisions with impunity. Usually, child employment is concealed by not maintaining ledgers of their names. Even worse, the piece-rate wages the children get fall far short of the minimum wage they are meant to be paid.

The Government's inaction on the continuing evil of child labour was illustrated in March 1981 when it rejected a recommendation by the Committee on Child Labour that the minimum age for employment of children should be 15, on the ground that the time was not "ripe" for acceptance of this recommendation. A Child Labour Cell has since been functioning at the Ministry of Labour with an under secretary in charge, but aside from generating some sketchy research, it has not been forthcoming with any recommendations in the two years since it began operating. An advisory board on child labour with the labour minister as chairman has also been working to review implementation of existing legislation and to suggest legislative and other measures of the welfare of working children. This board was also supposed to recommend the industries and areas where there must be progressive elimination of child labour. There has, however, been only deafening silence from the board.

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land. The Nadars, who own most of the match and fireworks factories, were among the lowest castes in the district; today, however, they rank economically far higher than the land-owning Vellala, Naicker, Reddiar and Maravar communities.

Originally toddy tappers, the majority of the Nadars converted to Christianity in the early 19th century. As a result, they acquired an education that was better than their economically superior fellows could afford. The community took to trading, set up *petrais* (fortified enclosures) along travel routes, and settled in the towns of Sivakasi, Virudhunagar, Tirumangalam, Sattankudi, Palayampatti and Aruppukottai. By the early 20th century, however, the Nadars had taken to agriculture. In 1922, two men from Sivakasi, P. Ayya Nadar and A. Shanmuga Nadar, travelled to Calcutta to learn the match-making process, imported machinery from Germany, and set up the first factory in Sivakasi. Gradually, however, the two men moved apart to set up hand-production units, and were joined by other Nadar families.

Until 1920 all matches used in India were imported from Sweden, Japan and Czechoslovakia. When indigenous production began, splints and veneers were imported from Japan. Much later came the development of local soft woods in Kerala and Karnataka. Today, Tamil Nadu controls 66 per cent of the match industry in India. WIMCO established mechanised units in 1932, and two years later, when the small manufacturers clamoured for protection, the Government evolved three categories of match factories for purposes of excise duty levies.

Spreading Empire: A major reason for the Nadar community's cohesion is the Nadar Mahayana Sangam, formed in 1910, which has master-minded the social, economic and intellectual development of the community. The Sangam has founded schools, colleges, cooperative banks and has a virtual monopoly in foodgrain and grocery distribution in the region. Today, the Nadars' empire extends over 730 small-scale and 1,330 cottage units in the match and fireworks industries. They also control the lucrative Sivakasi litho printing industry, which turns out everything from match labels and calendars to posters and books.

The British evolved a plan in 1937 to solve Ramanathapuram's acute water-shortage, which involved the construction of the Keerayan Alagar Dam in the Western Ghats to irrigate 3.5 lakh acres of land in the drought-prone district. Since Independence, the plan has been reviewed five times, but no dam has been built.

The Tamil Nadu Vivasaigal Sangham (Farmers' Association) led by C. Narayanaswamy Naidu, has been gathering considerable support in the district from the poorer farmers because of its demands for lower electricity charges for small landowners, eradication of loans totalling Rs 440 crore, proper compensation payments when labourers die at work, and the fixing of equitable procurement rates. Another organisation working among the poor villagers of the district is the Indian Peoples Front (IPF). Says U.G. Narainswamy Naidu, president of the Tamil Nadu branch of the IPF: "Child labour continues in the district because drought and lack of employment forces parents to send their children to work. There is also a strategy on the part of the state Government not to develop this area. Ultimately, children cannot be organised. child labour favours the employers."

Recommendations: "A common interest has developed between the employers and employees, as a result which employment of children continues without protest," says the Harbans report, "and the government agencies have also been partly responsible for this." The report accepts that banning child labour would not effectively halt the practice. Instead, it suggests, working hours should be reduced, wages increased and coupled with incentives for production. Stating that "the minimum wages for the match industry have not been revised since 19[illegible]" the report recommends that piecerate be abolished, wages linked to the cost of living index. Recommends that non formal education be given to children in the factories, the report says. "School attendance should be made compulsory and should be a condition precedent to employment in factories."

Such sentiments have, however, been suppressed by the interested parties. The Nadar community received a tremendous boost when K. Kamaraj, himself a Nadar, became the state's chief minister in 1953—and ever since its growing political clout has helped it conceal and perpetuate child labour. In Ramanathapuram's villages and towns, thousands of children continue to work at jobs that have only cruelty, danger and indifference as their conditions.

Worse still, the children's utility as workers peters out as they grow older—and their places are taken by younger children whose unprotesting dexterity helps their parents eke out a living, when millions of people over the country light a match to crackers for Diwali, or read small items about a few children dying in accidents, does Sivakasi flash briefly in their subconscious.

Later in the failing light of evening in Sivakasi, watching hundreds of children packed like sardines in ramshackle buses travel home from the factories, the nation's lack of conscience settles like a funereal shroud over the mind.

The children's utility as workers peters out as they grow older—and their places are taken by younger children whose unprotesting dexterity helps their parents eke out a living.

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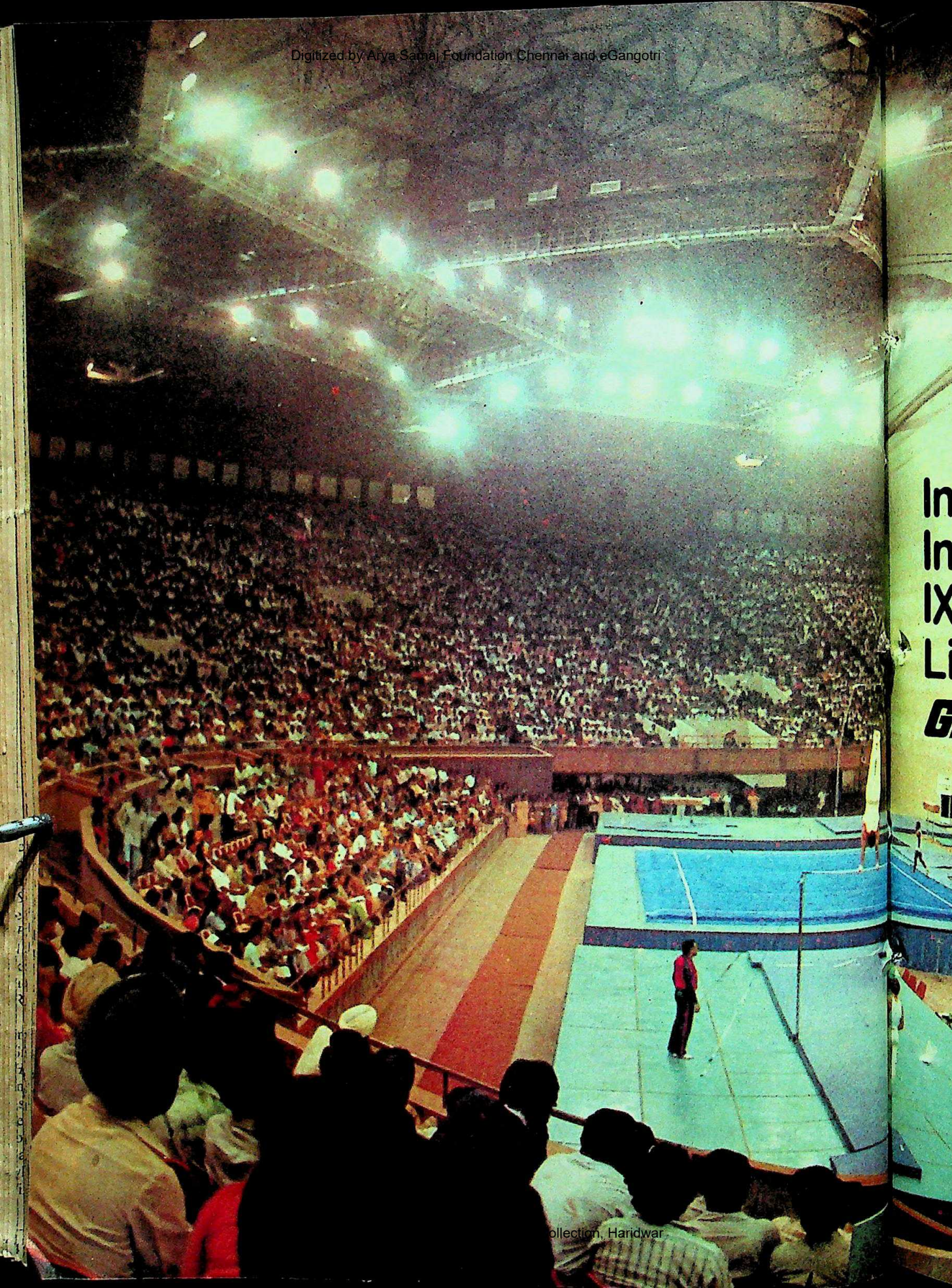

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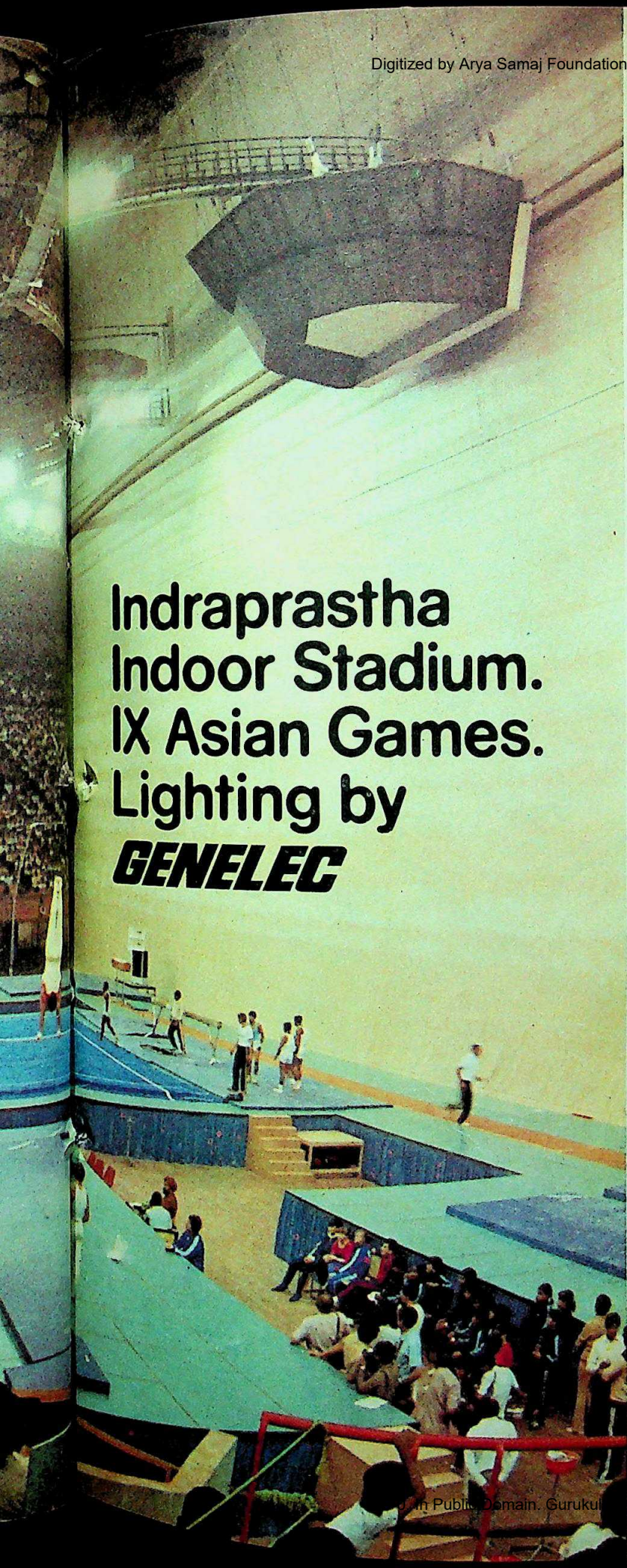

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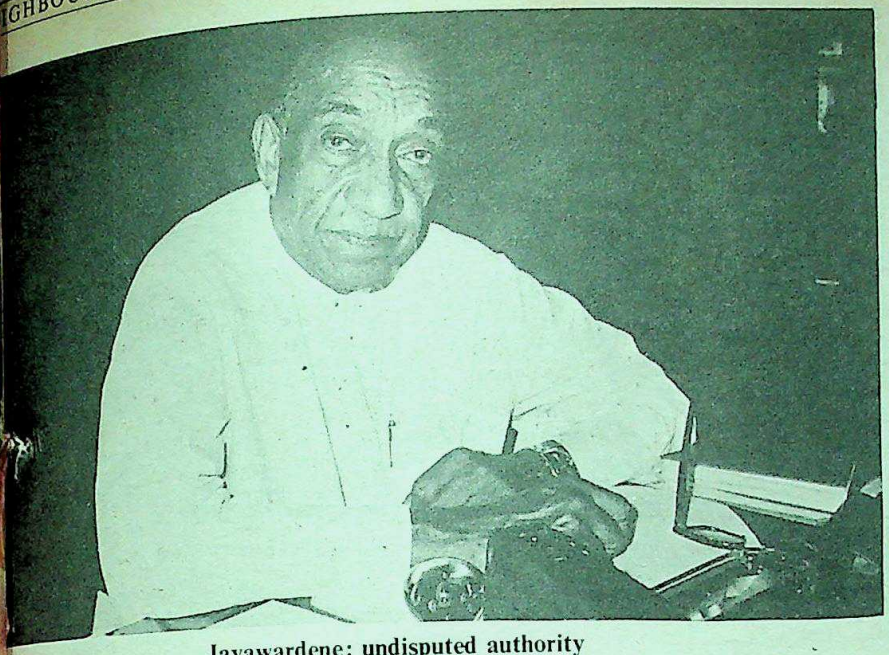

Jayawardene: undisputed authority

LANKA

ote Of Confidence

WITH 57 lakh out of a total electorate of 81 lakh voting, the United National Party (UNP) won the ember 22 referendum to extend the life he Parliament till August 1989 by five s. The margin of victory has not upset UNP supporters who are quick to point that on October 20, the Opposition didates who ran against President awardene altogether topped the 30-lakh . At the referendum, the Opposition es working either through a "com- front" or independently against the ernment succeeded in polling only 26 votes.

Besides, argue UNP analysts, The mil United Liberation Front (TULF) had ed for "non-participation" at the er presidential poll. So the turnout he Tamil north was poor. This time, TULF worked hard against the vernment and the Tamil vote swung ngly behind the party. In view of this, Opposition should have mustered re than 30 lakh votes.

Not unexpectedly, the Opposition ta- comfort from figures too. From 80 per in October, the total votes polled pped sharply to 70 per cent, which is below the national average in the past years. Further President Jayawardene 34.5 lakh whereas the UNP's vote on ember 22 was only 31 lakh, a clear indication that at least 350,000 UNP voters did not approve of the Government's decision to hold a referendum instead of the general election due before July next year. The island celebrated 50 years of universal franchise last year and the Sri Lankan voter's incurable habit of ousting successive administrations makes the power of electing an MP a dearly cherished right.

Strong Allegations: The Opposition leaders, and Mrs Bandaranaike in particular, claim that their performance would have been much better if the two-month-old Emergency had been withdrawn well before December 22. The Emergency is still on. In several press statements, the Opposition has also made allegations of "misuse of the state machine, intimidation and thuggery".

Mrs Bandaranaike, however, neglects to mention another important reason for the Opposition's failure to thwart the Government on such a contentious issue. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), the UNP's main rival for 30 years, has not yet recovered from the family squabbles, factional strife and intrigues for succession, which have wrought havoc ever since Mrs Bandaranaike was stripped of her civic rights in 1980. This accounted for the steady stream of SLFP defectors from early December onwards. The list include her long-time deputy Maitripala Senanayake, ex-ministers P.B.G. Kalugalle, S.D.R. Jayaratne, V.T.G. Karunaratne and S.K. Sooriyaratchi. The UNP must have gained much from their open support. That fact further highlights the real possibility of "non-participation" by traditional UNP voters.

A first glance at the figures brings home two noteworthy features. The voting pattern shows a strange "north-south dialogue". The Tamil north has given a resolute "No" to the referendum with constituencies like Jaffna, Trincomalee, Kopay and Nallur, and down the North-eastern cost to Batticoloa generously filling the "pot" (the opposition symbol).

Recent Development: In the Sinhalese areas, the UNP has lost or fared modestly in several coastal towns from south to deep south. When the fortunes of the "old Left" were high in the forties and fifties, these electorates were often described as a "string of red forts". With the Left's decline, the forts fell to the UNP and SLFP.

Are there signs of a resurgence of southern leftism? The deep south is the authentic home of the "new Left" Janata Vimyukta Perumana (JVP) which launched the 1971 youth insurrection in which thousands died. The Communist Party's only major base is also in the far south. What makes the "north-south" response strange is that the deep south is also the ancient seat of Sinhala nationalism from where Sinhala kings struck back at the Tamil kingdoms in the north.

With Prime Minister Premadasa as anchor man, the UNP held Colombo and right down the main Colombo-Kandy road overrunning many Bandaranaike bastions. But its excellent showing in the Kandyan (hill country) areas has puzzled the experts. Mrs Bandaranike, T.B. Ilangaratne, the SLFP's deputy leader, Hector Kobbekaduwe, the presidential candidate, are all Kandyans whereas President Jayawardene and Premier Premadasa are Colombo-based. Besides, the SLFP has always enjoyed the reputation of being the spokesman of the rural voter, with the UNP far more urban-oriented. Is it development policy (the Mahaveli Irrigation Project, rural electrification and housing) or political developments (the SLFP's misfortunes) that is blurring this old distinction?

Jayawardene may look at the figures from another angle, probably constituency by constituency. When he obtained undated letters of resignation from 142 UNP MP's he spoke of "reconstituting" the parliamentary group. With a guaranteed five-sixths majority for the next six years, he may like to drop the less popular MP's and introduce new talent. Under the 1978 Constitution, when an MP dies or resigns, the party leader nominates a successor.

—MERVYN DE SILVA in Colombo

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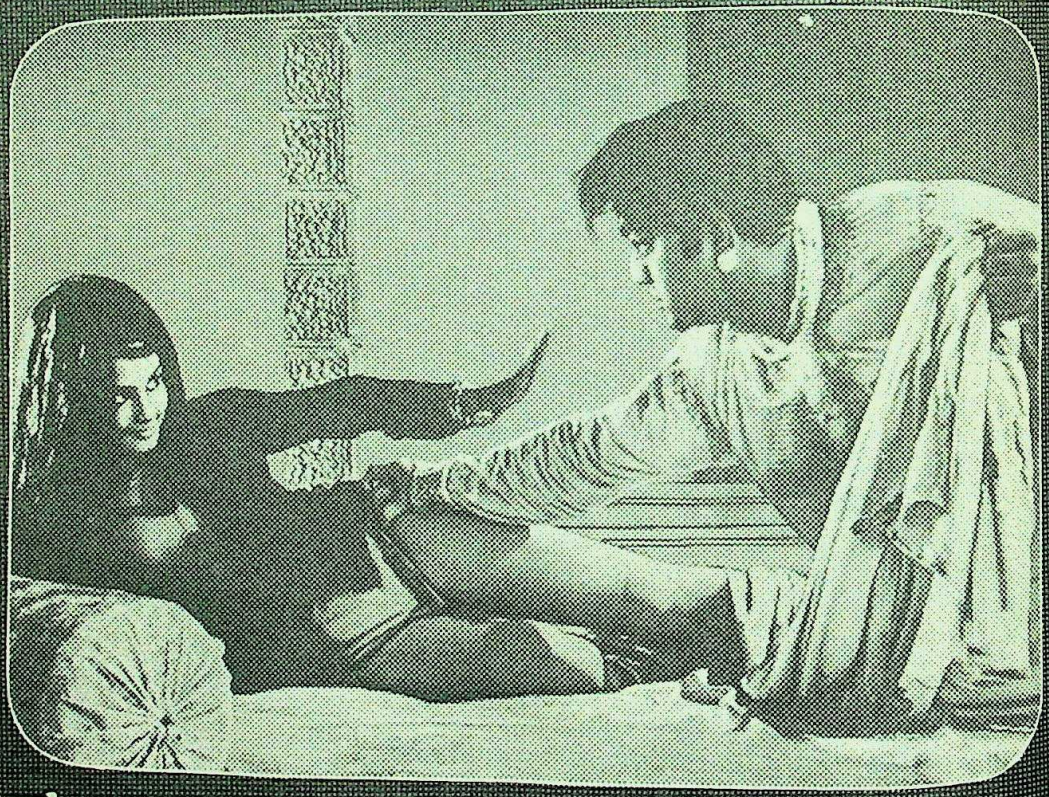
Do you remember how Premnath seduced Padma Khanna in 'Johny Mera Naam'?

It was your first date and you giggled into each other's chips and chicken rolls and held hands all the way home!



That was the time Star & Style predicted Rajesh Khanna's rise to Superstardom.

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NUSRAT BHUTTO

"Pakistan May Break Up"

PARIS, for years a haven for dethroned kings and South American dictators, ousted African presidents and prime ministers hardly noticed the stealthy arrival of Nusrat Bhutto, chairman of the outlawed Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and wife of Pakistan's executed prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. French television, which graphically recorded events like the spectacular entry in a hijacked aircraft of deposed Iranian president Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, Mujahedin chief Masood Rajavi and the wandering Kampuchean leader Prince Norodom Sihanouk, seemed to have missed Nusrat Bhutto completely. The 53-year-old indomitable woman, whose spirit and fire is apparently unbroken by the execution of her husband or long years spent in detention under General Zia-ul-Haq's martial law regime, had decided to quietly check into a gracious Parisian hotel. After her media splash in Munich, her first interview in France appeared in an obscure French daily.

Gravely ill with cancer of the left lung, Nusrat Bhutto, after an 83-day dispute with Pakistani authorities over whether she required hospitalisation abroad is now optimistic that West European doctors can cure her. Besides treatment, her German doctors had prescribed prolonged rest. This is what she set out to do in Paris as she checked into a suite in one of its most elegant hotels—the Plaza Athenee—on the Avenue Montaigne which is chock-full of glittering fashion houses.

Tending to her meticulously was her younger sister. A bright and energetic woman, Behjat fusses over the frail and angular Nusrat. She bristles: "Nusrat is just four years older than me; but look what they have done to my sister."

In a lengthy interview to Correspondent RAMESH CHANDRAN—*her first to an Indian periodical since her husband's execution—Nusrat Bhutto, swaddled in woollens and a stylish bottle green scarf, showed flashes of anger when she referred to the "martial law authorities" (whom she kept calling "they") and their reneging on vows to hold elections. But there was little bitterness. She speaks lucidly and with a daunting precision for dates.*

Her illness causes her to pause frequently and only once during the interview, when she referred to her final moments with her late husband, did she seem close to losing her composure. What emerged is a resolute, tough-as-nails individual. She frequently takes recourse to her PPP slogan: "Democracy our policy. All power to the people." She speaks about conditions inside Pakistan with little inhibition, but shows no analytical appetite for issues loaded with politi-tions—Pak-US relations, Pakista-programme and the recent Indo-Pa-

Ever since Nusrat and Behjat the Athenee, French echoes in its ta along with the hushed cadences of Urdu and Sindhi, spoken by Pakistanis. Watch-ceedings from a politi-are two French Secu-men sporting tell-glasses. Excerpts:

There was pressure building up inside Pakistan. The Pakistan Medical Association had seen my report.... Then there were sympathisers and well-wishers both at home and abroad. And Mrs Gandhi's letter to Zia.

Q. ***Your doc-optimistic about ca-Are you planning to Pakistan after ju-ment?***

A. Yes, I have to to Pakistan. But we have another test in five months to see tive the medicines treatment have been doctors will tell me next. Right now I fe better.

Q. ***There ha-some speculation a-finally convinced the authorities to let abroad—the worse your physical con increasingly strident tional pressure.***

A. It wasn't thing. There was building up inside The Pakistan Medic ciation had seen m and were agitated processing of my ap to go abroad for t was taking so long. T were sympathisers wishers both at h abroad. And Mrs letter to Zia. She was head of state who op gested I should be a go abroad to have better medical facilities.

Q. ***According to reports in national press, there seems to ha an immense crowd of well-wisher airport to see you off.***

A. I don't know how many th It was a wave of humanity, and I of getting squashed in the crowds

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since I couldn't get enough air. This ns due to my illness.

. You have been under detention during of martial rule. Did you spend most of e under house arrest or in prison?

. You mean in the last five and a half Well out of this period, four years I been under detention, both in prison nder house arrest. I have been moved er Pakistan, under house arrest in e, in Tihala Jail, the Karachi Central

. What were the conditions like in ?

Inevitably, in the first ys, they would treat us We were kept in second ells. Then gradually they relax certain conditions, hich you could get your food, beds, clothes. But ruelty took other forms. of our friends or our ons were allowed to come ee us, like other prisoners entitled to. They wouldn't cording to the jail manual. said under martial law, jail als don't count.

. Did you ever spend time other criminals?

. In Karachi Central Jail March 7, 1981 to be —I was kept in a C Class for four days. Mind this is being done to a ber of the National As- ly and head of the Pakis- eople's Party. There were her women prisoners who Singers, dancers, kidnap- prostitutes...

. What was the hardest all these years of incar- n you have had to endure?

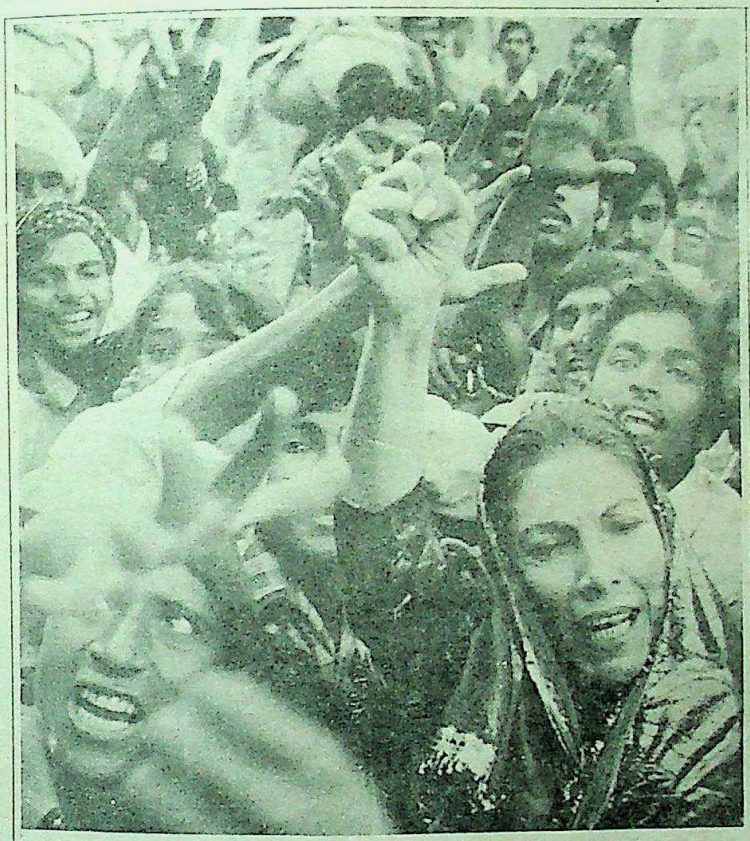
. More than anything It was solitary confine- You weren't allowed to single human being. The 'house arrest' exists only You were completely in solitary confinement. method was to take over house and then convert it a jail. They would issue this amation: "Now you are g to be under detention in jail, 70 Clifton" (the Bhutto residence). would then impose all the rules of a al jail like bringing their own locks, ng and closing the gates at a certain They refused permission for anybody me and see us. We would then request to grant us at least the facilities able to common criminals. This they consistently refused to do.

Q. *The 1982 Amnesty International Report makes disturbing reading. It alleges several thousand political prisoners inside Pakistan. Many of them are flogged; there is systematic use of torture and a few have died as a result. Pakistani officials have denied all this.*

A. The Amnesty report is entirely true. Political prisoners have been tortured. I repeat: political prisoners have been tortured and some have died. They have been flogged so severely that they have been maimed. When Zia orders flogging, it is not to punish someone for his crime, but to maim him. Often the victim's kidney's have been ruptured, spinal cords broken and they are carried away on stretchers after the beatings. For punishments, Islam sets out conditions: thin canes have to be used, the skin of the person should not turn red and get cracked due to the flogging. If that happens, the floggers ought to be flogged. What is now happening in Zia's Pakistan is flogging to maim.

Q. *Your daughter Benazir—how did she face up to all this?*

A. Benazir spent an entire year in solitary confinement. During this time the martial law authorities wouldn't let even her lawyer see her, nor any of her friends or party colleagues. Besides the loneliness in prison, it can be unbearably hot—as high as 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Once when some close friends took some cold water for her, the jail superintendent returned it. Under any sort of rules, this should not have been allowed to happen.



If he thinks that the PPP is going to disintegrate, Zia is sadly mistaken. For the last five and a half years he has sought to destroy our party, but has not got anywhere. He brazenly says he is using the carrot and stick treatment.

Q. *After the crackdown on the political parties following the hijacking last year, the Opposition seems to have no sense of purpose or cohesion. It seems to have been unable to find an issue to rouse the people to back demands for return to civilian rule. It seems to have been unable to generate the kind of mass upsurge that brought down Ayub Khan.*

A. At that time there was no martial law in the country. Ayub Khan had martial law for only three and a half months. General Zia has ruled under martial law regulations for more than five and a half years. Since he is hated and is unpopular in the country, Zia knows fully well what will happen if tomorrow there is no martial law...

Q. *Well, what will happen if tomorrow there is no martial law? If there are elections will the PPP win?*

A. The PPP is the only party in Pakistan which can be called a national party, and if there are elections tomorrow, we will win easily, even if I have to say it.

Q. *Prior to his US visit in the last fortnight, President Zia promised in interviews to the American media that elections will be scheduled in 1984 in Pakistan.*

A. No, he wouldn't. He will never hold elections under the rules of the Constitution. By 1984, if he thinks that the PPP is going to disintegrate, Zia is sadly mistaken. For the last five and a half years he has sought to destroy our party, but has not got anywhere. He has conjured up court cases

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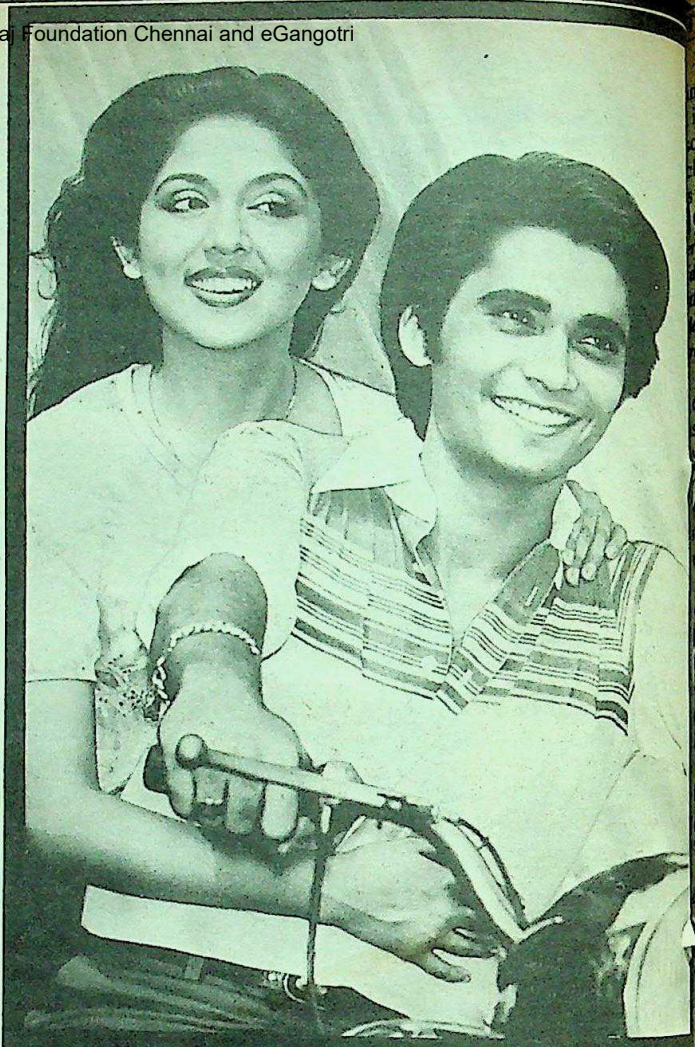

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st our senior leaders. Some of them are f they left the party, their problems will lved. Others are lured with the posts hief' ministerships. He brazenly says using the carrot and stick treatment.

Q. *The Pakistan President had some interesting things to say too. He dec- that elections in Pakistan are an hema and create a crisis; and that a little ago politics in Pakistan meant violence, cter assassination, polarisation . . .*

A. Rubbish. Absolute rubbish. These mpty phrases by which he is defending elf and his martial law. If the situation nues, if we don't have elections and a ritic structure, Pakistan may break pieces—then there will be no Pakistan. essential and vitally important that we a Constitution. I am afraid and fearing Pakistan's future. It will be a great dy if some such calamity occurs.

Q. *Regarding Pak-US relations: Having the mainstay of the US sive strategy in South Asia, since Soviet troops moved Afghanistan, do you think arge infusions of military economic assistance have d prop up the martial law me?*

A. Well, the present US ministration says that the rican assistance is meant e people of Pakistan, not eneral Zia. We accept this ment.

Q. *Do you have plans to go ashington? There was some of an invitation from Presi- Reagan.*

A. There was no invitation. n't know who started this our. But I have taken a visa e United States. If I need a second on from American doctors, I may go , and not necessarily to Washington.

Q. *Going back a few years to your and's trial—it was widely condemned as vesty. Do you think a highly coordinated rnational campaign could have probably his life?*

A. There was considerable international ure. Leaders from various countries of world had made appeals. But more eals could not have helped; it would not e made the slightest difference, for Zia's d was already made up.

Q. *Were you allowed to see him on the day before his execution?*

A. Yes. On the last day, they took me my daughter Benazir to see him in ala.

Q. *How was he then? What did he talk t?*

A. He was very brave. He talked about a great many things. I knew it was his last day. The jail superintendent knew it too. But I couldn't bear to tell him. When he saw me and Benazir, he asked the superintendent: "So my wife and daughter have come together. Is this my last day?" The superintendent replied, "Yes, it is." "Have you got your orders? " he asked. The superintendent replied: "Yes, it is on my table." By then it didn't seem to affect him. He was very calm. He made light of the situation. He said, "Okay, get me a barber. I'll have a nice shave, look clean and trim." I don't know how he could have remained completely under control till the very end. For me, it was terrible . . . He said it was not the fault of these people. The jail was packed with policemen. We couldn't move since the corridors were so crowded. We couldn't hug him or kiss him. Yes, he was very calm and brave.

ZAHID HUSSAIN

Bhutto with Nusrat (extreme left) and their children Benazir and Shahnawaz in August 1977; and Nusrat (top) in their Karachi home after Bhutto's death

Q. *Bhutto was known to be an incorrigible India-baiter. He despised Indians, didn't he?*

A. On the contrary. He wanted lasting friendship with India. He wanted India and Pakistan to live in peace. Otherwise he would not have gone to Simla. And the treaty would not have been termed a success then. He admired Indians.

Q. *What did he think of Mrs Gandhi?*

A. He had great respect for Mrs Gandhi. And his admiration for Jawaharlal Nehru was well-known. As you know, Shahnawaz Bhutto knew Mrs Gandhi's grandfather and grandmother closely. Besides all this, he was born and brought up in India.

Q. *During all these years of detention, you have remained out of touch with your sons Murtaza and Shahnawaz. Have you met them since leaving Pakistan?*

A. You may not believe this, but I am yet to get a phone call from either of them enquiring after their mummy who is seriously unwell. I have no information of their whereabouts. But I have been reliably informed that they have left Kabul.

Q. *What do you and your party think of Al Zulfikar's style of functioning?*

A. My sons are not young boys anymore. They are grown up. They know what they are doing. As far as I and the Pakistan People's Party are concerned, we believe completely in democracy and democratic methods.

Q. *When you heard that Mrs Gandhi had written to General Zia requesting your release to go abroad for treatment, what was your reaction?*

A. I was so happy. I thought: how lucky Indians are! They not only have a democratic-minded leader but also a system. I wrote to her from Karachi, thanking her.

Q. *You have seen your husband hanged, your family fragmented, spent years under detention, and you are now very ill. Where do you find solace under moments of stress?*

A. From the people of Pakistan, I get all the solace. They have given me such great support. I don't get any encouragement and hope from any other sources. They give me hope for the future. Because they are a good people, a brave people. And I have seen how much they have suffered. I have seen youngsters with their toe-nails pulled off, teenaged boys who have been so lashed that they are unable to walk. They are indeed a brave people . . .

Their encouragement is what makes me fight on.

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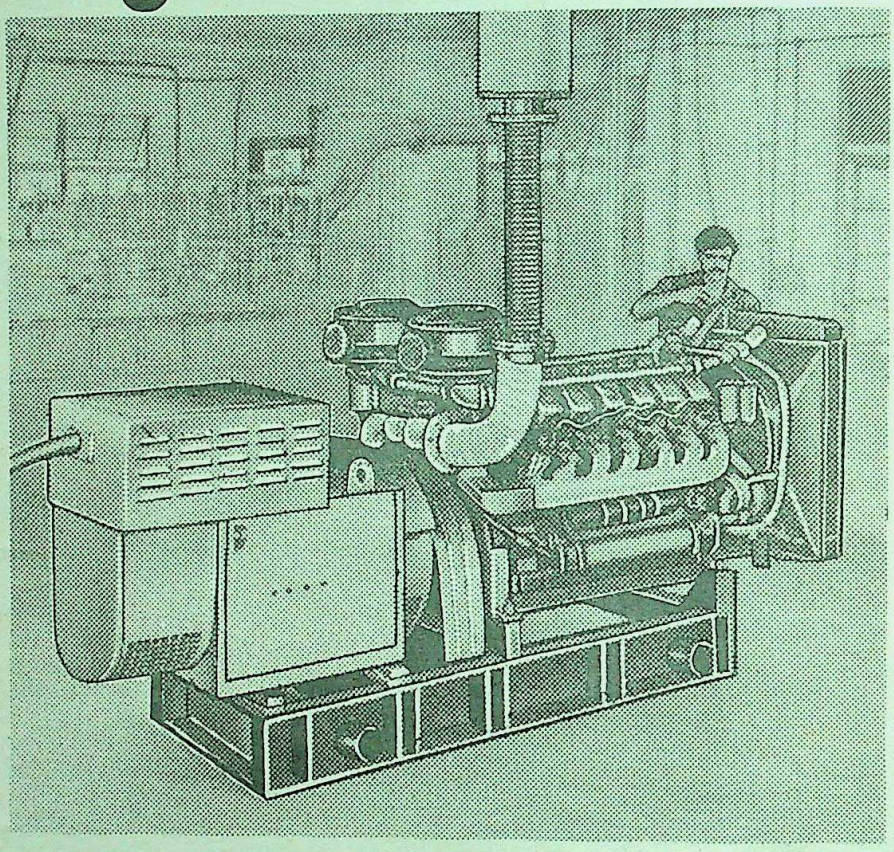

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Best film/theatre reviews	3	9	13	**53** ✓	22
Best city news	**34** ✓	15	19	**11**	21
Best book/other reviews	2	9	4	**48** ✓	37
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Most objective	5	16	17	**53** ✓	19

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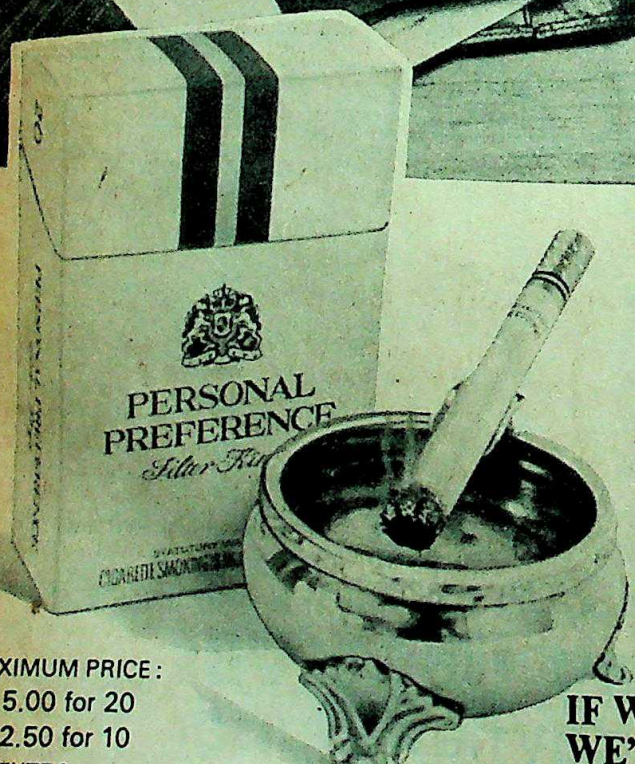

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CROSSING THE LIMIT

FOR THE first time since the Rs 5,000 crore International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan was sanctioned in November 1981, the Government is in trouble over the financial limits agreed to with the IMF. Specifically, it had been stipulated that the Government's borrowings should not exceed Rs 35,063 crore on December 31, 1982. But this limit was crossed as early as October 29, and borrowings rose to as high as Rs 35,515 crore on November 12. This level has dropped since as a result of desperate efforts to bring the figure within the limit again, but the actual level remains too high. An IMF team was in Delhi during November to review the loan situation, but nothing is known about the discussions.

Meanwhile, the Government has quietly launched a revenue-raising blitzkrieg, one objective of which is presumably to reduce the need for borrowings. Two decisions last month, to raise auxiliary customs duty and the effective excise duty on cigarettes are expected to raise hundreds of crores in a full year. This is more than the amount from total tax measures introduced in many Central budgets.

WO-WHEELER TRAFFIC

NDIAN companies seem to have developed a sudden fascination for the vehicles manufactured by Piaggio, the Italian scooter giant. Close on the heels of both Lohia Machines and dhra Pradesh Scooters tying up collaboration agreements with ggio, a third company has been negotiating a deal with the lian firm for an ultra-low-powered two-wheeler. Cesagoa, a le-known company based in Goa, is trying to work out an rangement for manufacturing Piaggio's Vespino model in India. hether a deal will eventually be struck is, however, an open estion since Cesagoa does not yet have a letter of intent for anufacturing two-wheelers, and the Government may not conder fresh applications in what is now a crowded field.

HIPPING IN

ILICON chips, basic to the microprocessor revolution, will soon be made for the first time in India, by Mettur Chemicals of Tamil Nadu. The company's Rs 3 crore plant, heduled to go on stream in April, will be able to feed the full omestic demand now being met by imports, estimated at 2,500 of wafers annually. The production programme marks the mination of a domestic research project conducted jointly by company and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

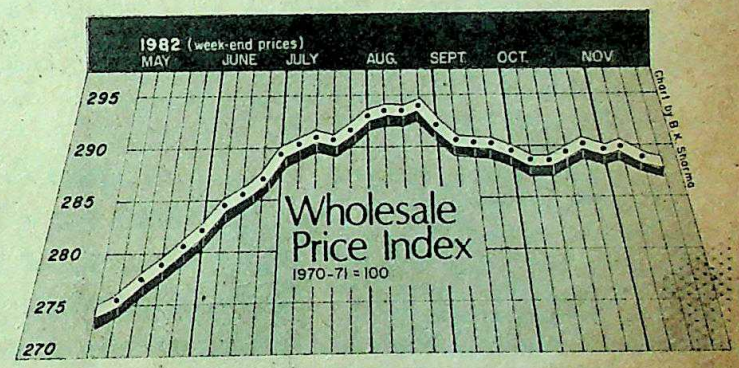
Company officials say they have been successful in their earch programme when rival efforts by national research bos have failed to deliver the goods. Mettur Chemicals will also n out 10 tonnes of polycrystalline silicon, an intermediate oduct from which chips will be manufactured by two other ctories that are proposed to be set up.

FLATED PROFITS

THE INDIAN corporate sector seems to be heading for a financial crunch. A Reserve Bank staff study shows that the steady rise in profitability reported in balance sheet gures is quite illusory and largely reflects the effect of inflation. llowing for the price rise, and taking into account the replacent cost of capital, the real rate of return dropped sharply from per cent in 1960–61 to 5.2 per cent in 1977–78, while the st-tax return virtually halved from 4.2 to 2.2 per cent. In a rallel development, the real rate of return is now substantially s than the cost of capital. The industries affected badly by ese trends are more in traditional areas like cotton and jute tiles and in some capital-intensive sectors.

TANGIBLE SUCCESS

WHATEVER the current problems with agricultural and industrial production, the Government's success on the price front remains a solid achievement. Wholesale prices at the end of November were barely 3 per cent above the level a



year earlier, and have been declining fairly steadily since the end of August, when the index peaked at 294. The crucial question now is whether prices will continue to decline, as they normally do at this time of the year because of the kharif harvest, or whether the abnormally poor crop will force a dangerous upswing in the index. The consumer price situation, meanwhile, is causing some worry, with the inflation rate being around 8 per cent in August, the latest month for which figures are available.

EXPANSION SPREE

ITC LTD, the diversified corporate giant, has launched itself on an expansion spree. Following up on its bid to acquire India Cements, and the parallel move to take over the sick Ashoka Paper Mills, the Calcutta-based company now proposes to set up two large export ventures: one for exporting computer software and the other for exporting cigarettes to East European markets. The foray into electronics software might be followed later by a programme to manufacture micro-computers. The software operation is likely to be based in south India, while the cigarette export unit is slated to come up in the Kandla free trade zone.

Yet another venture on the cards is the marketing of packaged tea, in collaboration with the UK-based Sethias, who now control Jokai Tea. A test marketing operation is already on preparatory to launching a full-scale war on the market now dominated by Brooke Bond and Lipton.

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ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Slipping Into A Rut

IS THERE an economist in the house? The Government's think-tank has apparently sprung a leak and the scenario for 1983 looks anything but hopeful. The prime minister has been too busy to pay much attention to what is happening on the economic front but when she returns from her election tour and settles down to some hard pre-budget thinking with her economic advisers she may discover that the chickens have already come home to roost and the Government is left with very little room for manoeuvre.

Firstly, the recession has not only come to stay but may deepen further into depression unless the Government acts promptly. To say that the recession is due to lack of demand is to say the obvious. The question is, where has the demand gone? Critics point to power shortage, red tapism, escalation in capital costs and crack-down on black money as a medley of causes responsible for the freeze. But most of them have been there throughout the past 30-odd years of planning. Why has then the industrial activity clammed up?

Those who argue that things would have been better had public investment not lagged behind are also barking up the wrong tree. Under the present conditions, a massive, non-selective drive in public investment, all other things remaining unchanged, would almost certainly lead to inflation. This is what Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee has been saying day in and day out and also what Manmohan Singh, the new governor of Reserve Bank emphasised last week in Bombay. Price rises—and falls—are the danger signals through which the economy—and society—conveys its assessment of the state of affairs. In an overcharged economy, one can have either growth or employment or price stability but not all the three, or even any two, at the same time. In India, the planners have currently chosen price stability at the cost of growth and employment while during the decade of the 1960s the planners chose, or, were forced to choose, growth at the cost of price inflation.

Grim Prospects: There are of course some experts like the Economic Administrative Reforms Commission Chairman Laxmi Kant Jha (*see Interview*) who argue that "no country develops with total price stability." Jha even mentions a figure—6 per cent—as a reasonable rate for price inflation. But how do you ensure that the rate remains below that level? One would be more or less confident of pegging down inflation at that rate if the food situation was within control. But this is precisely where all calculations seem to be going wrong for, whatever the long-term possibilities in this sphere, the immediate outlook, say, up to about 1985 or so, is decidedly grim.

There are some people who fear that food production may have reached a plateau. Last year (1981–82) the food crop came to 133.6 million tonnes which may have been a peak but is only 2 million tonnes higher than the level reached in 1978–79, that is, three years ago. The output in the current year is expected to be no more than 125 million tonnes which would take the country back again about five years. India seems to strike a plateau every five years or so: first in 1971, then in 1976, and now 1981. During the previous two stages, the Green Revolution was somehow saved and progress continued. Are we sure that the same thing may happen again next year? As Jha says, the long-term outlook is hopeful, for the revolution has yet to spread to the rest of the country. But as Keynes once said, in the long run, we are all dead.

Three years of stagnation on the food front is bound to have its impact on the rest of the economy. Already there are reports of bankers complaining that there are few borrowers. Businessmen say that there is not much point in further ment in, say, engineering industry, the current slack in production cap first taken care of. But this is possible without (1) an appreciab crease in domestic demand and/or rise in exports. The first is out of qu given the current sticky conditions food front which set the norm for demand. The second too can be rule for the present, as the world reces unlikely to get better unless it gets first, and it doesn't seem likely that will be any marked improvement situation in the coming year.

Foreign Influences: There was when India could brush off upheav the outside world as of little conseq to her highly protected and, to a pearances, fairly self-reliant econ That is no more the case. exports such as tea, coffee sugar now account for less th per cent of the country's to ports. The remaining 70 per have to come from the facturing sector which is small, no more than a quar the entire economy. Expor mand therefore constitutes chunk, may be as much a q of the total demand for indu products, which explains w sneeze in London or New Yo Moscow can bring Bombay Calcutta and Madras down a severe cold.

Export demand now accounts for a big chunk of the total demand for industrial products, perhaps as much as a quarter, which explains why a sneeze in London or New York or Moscow can bring down Bombay and Calcutta with a severe cold.

After over 30 years of planning have now come to a stage when ther radical shifts in the pattern of deman only as between one product and an but also between sectors. Take the industry. The overall demand for may have just inched forward over the few years but the demand for syn has increased by leaps and bounds. as far cotton cloth is concerned, the duction has shifted from mills to p looms which is one reason why the old strike of textile workers in Bo has produced little more than a ripp the industrial scene. Twenty years a strike of this duration would have ca havoc not only in Bombay but the w of India but today even the textile kers, many of whom have apparently absorbed in other industries, a unconcerned.

Indian businessmen have been

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ining about industrial recession for the four or five years without realising what the economy is passing through not a momentary spell of recession but more pernicious phenomenon known as nation. Industrial growth since 1966 been rather poor, the growth rate have been more than halved from 7.8 per annually during the decade 1955–65 3.4 per cent in 1965–75. Industrial employment in the private sector which went from 5 million to 6.8 million between and 1966 has remained virtually at latter level for the last 10 years. In the sector there has been some growth and anywhere near the kind of rapid nsion in the previous decade.

Neglected Areas: Things would perhaps have been different if the public sector had not been lackadaisical in its performance. During the last three years or so, very few new projects have been taken up, and none at all with a mass impact. There are certain fields like power, for instance, which somehow continue to muddle through but which could do with a thorough overhaul. Another area crying for attention is housing which would have not only led to sizeable employment at lower levels but improved the quality of life for a large number of urban dwellers for whom housing remains the No. 1 problem. The planners have never taken housing seriously possibly because of the various vested interests involved. Building societies in England created a vast property-owning class which remains the main sheet-anchor of British democracy.

The planners are possibly more worried about the next budget than the overhauling of the economy. The fact that state elections in the south were held before the budget rather than after has led some people to suspect that a heavy dose of taxation may be on the cards.

For some reason, this seems unlikely. Firstly, it would go against the trend of the last three years since the present regime took over and secondly, it may not really be necessary. The treasury is said to have collected far more than its estimate and is not straining at the leash. The finance minister may therefore take an easier way out and go in for a slightly higher dose of deficit financing than is warranted by circumstances. There are many people including Jha who believe that "we have been over-cautious in regard to deficit financing". Pranab Mukherjee may decide after all that price stability at the cost of growth may bring in temporary political dividends but is self-defeating in the long run. It may be a risk worth taking.

L.K. JHA

Wrong Signals

FRESH from a meeting of the Brandt Commission in Ottawa of which he is a member, Laxmi Kant Jha, chairman of the Economic Administrative Reforms Commission, spoke to INDIA TODAY *last week on the current economic situation. Excerpts:*

Q. ***Do you see any signs of the recession clearing?***

A. Recession implies lack of demand, not just fall in production. Now the fall may be due to various causes—lack of power, lack of credit or raw materials. They first talked of credit. It was bunk. Railways were moving more coal than before, so there was less demand for trucks. How would more credit have helped in such a case? In the case of tractors, it is not something you replace every year, so demand was slackening. The fall in food production meant less money in villagers' hands and this ultimately means less demand for industrial products and therefore idle capacity in factories. In the case of textile mills, there has been a structural shift in demand, from mills to power looms as well as from cotton to synthetics.

But now banks say they have no borrowers; *that* is recession and indeed a serious matter.

Q. ***You think time has come for reflating the economy?***

A. I have always felt we have been over-cautious in regard to deficit financing. It is surely a question of taking a risk one way or another. No country develops with total price stability. Price stability is important for those who have income. Employment generation is important for those who have no income. When we think of the poor as distinct from middle income groups, employment generation is desirable—both in economic and social terms.

Jha: worried by recession

I would consider 6 per cent price inflation as a fairly moderate rate. After all, in England and other countries they are throwing their hats in the air for bringing inflation rate below the two-digit level. A little price inflation is a small price to pay for growth.

Q. ***But wouldn't foreign exchange be a constraint?***

A. Balance of payments is my No. 1 concern. A vast erosion of our foreign exchange reserves has taken place over the past two years and there has also been a general decline in aid levels. India is no more at the top of the list of the donor countries as far as aid is concerned. There is China, a major new claimant, and there are middle income countries like Mexico and Brazil which have to be bailed out as they are in trouble. Moreover the recession in the rich countries affects our exports and our terms of trade are deteriorating.

Somehow, because of the IMF loan and import liberalisation, we are not getting the kind of signals we should. In fact, we are getting wrong signals. Things seem to be lovely—imports are easy, foreign travel is also easy—but I don't think they are. In fact, as I said, it should be our No. 1 worry.

Q. ***Do you think we have misused the IMF loan?***

A. No, I wouldn't say that. But I have been unhappy about liberalisation without higher import tariffs. Our coordination between import liberalisation and import tariffs has not been, let us put this way, very wise.

Q. ***But wouldn't the IMF object to higher tariffs?***

A. IMF doesn't really come into the picture. The loan is unconditional. It becomes part of your foreign exchange reserves and how you use it your business. You may buy anything with it—plant and machinery, toys, even arms. But having taken the loan, you naturally take care to see that it is put to good use.

Q. ***What kind of use?***

A. The loan is actually meant for major structural readjustments. Take, for instance, crude oil. We have done a good job on it. But we should take a long-term look at some of the things we take for granted. Take sugar. Exports have collapsed. We have too much land under sugar. We should stabilise production at a lower level and switch over the land to oilseeds and pulses. This calls for long-term planning of high quality and it is for such things that the cushion of a large loan is required. In the short run, we should reflate in a selective way, starting with city transport and housing.

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RAILWAYS

Head-On Collision

ACCIDENTS occur frequently enough in the railways, but a head-on collision in New Delhi's Rail Bhavan is another matter altogether. And when Railway Minister A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury called a press conference last fortnight to openly threaten the dismissal of Mohinder Singh Gujral, the chairman of the railway board, notice had been served that now it was open war.

Choudhury is a temperamental man, and when his appointment as railway minister was announced in September, many railway officials saw red. But Gujral went full steam ahead with the same drive that had helped him bring about a dramatic improvement in railway performance since he took charge in November 1980.

Choudhury was soon issuing a series of orders that the officials frequently found impossible to carry out, and the minister responded by roundly condemning the railways at internal meetings and elsewhere. The atmosphere was quickly charged with tension as acid file notings went back and forth. "Don't treat me like a child," Choudhury is reported to have once told Gujral.

Final Confrontation: But the minister's deliberately provocative comments at the press conference seemed almost calculated to force a final show-down. Gujral would have to go "if he did not mend his ways", said the stocky Choudhury. And further: "If anybody thinks he can have his own empire, that somebody has to go." Broadening his attack, the minister went on to make the most sweeping charges, that "most of the (train) drivers are drunk", railway police were all corrupt, railwaymen showed "complete negligence", and services were very poor. Throughout the blistering hour-long attack, he had not one good word to say about the improvements Gujral and his men had brought about in recent months: record levels of freight movement, a transition from losses to profits, and major operational changes that have enabled greater efficiency.

Choudhury's outburst drew instant condemnation from the press. The *Times of India* called it "low comedy". *The Statesman* suggested that the minister was incapable of "constructive thought". The *Indian Express* agreed that "somebody has to go", but said "that somebody should be Mr Choudhury".

But there was no immediate response from Gujral, whose term of office, extended by two years in 1981, is due to expire in June. But it was obvious that the cavernous Rail Bhavan did not have room for both men. Either Gujral or Choudhury—or both—would have to go. And as insiders saw it, the choice before Mrs Gandhi would be to either assert the supremacy of the politician over the civil servant, or to decide that Gujral's proven abilities were necessary for the efficient running of the country's largest organisation.

Choudhury (left) and Gujral: open war

The atmosphere was quickly charged with tension as acid file notings went back and forth. "Don't treat me like a child," Choudhury is reported to have once told Gujral.

Choudhury's complaints have been that the railways are ignoring three crucial objectives: safety, security and punctuality. He has also repeatedly announced that there should be a decentralisation of powers within the railways, reducing those of the five-member board and giving more to officers in the field. And when he sensed resistance, he thundered at a conference he had summoned in early November that the "People's representative should have supremacy".

Favoured Constituency: Officials react to these charges with outrage. The "people's representative", they say, has asked for two air-conditioned cars in Calcutta, expressing surprise that the railwa not have any. A request for sanctio gone to the Finance Ministry. A railways have been forced to take ultra-expensive guest-house in Calcu Choudhury's use, while a luxurious house is being constructed in M Choudhury's parliamentary constitue

Many of Choudhury's orders officials tried to resist were aimed a therbedding his constituency. Ma sought to be upgraded from a mars yard to a divisional headquarters being shifted from the north-fronti way (headquarter in Gauhati) eastern railway, which has its in Calcutta. Two new air-con ned rest-houses are being b swimming pool is under con tion in the railway colony, a local railway hospital is being than tripled in size. The statio will have closed circuit TV other new amenities.

To provide jobs to local Choudhury has started work new locomotive workshop in A signals establishment ha shifted from its original s Bongaigaon in Assam to M heedless of the unrest this cause in an already unsettled To handle all the work, a chie neer's establishment has been in Malda. And the day aft press conference in Delhi, Cho ry dragged two members o board off to Malda to review progress. Choudhury visits every fortnight, but has n found the time to go either or south.

Rescheduled Trains: The Gau press, which used to run twice a we tween Malda and Calcutta, now daily. A new 130-km railway line i laid between Eklakhi and Balurgha cost of Rs 60 crore, although the Pl Commission has not as yet been ask approval. And Choudhury has also red that a retired railway servants' h society in Malda should be given r land.

The minister's generosity e beyond Malda to all of West B Three stretches of track in the state been ordered to be electrified, and least one of them (Adra to Bankura connections beyond are not electri

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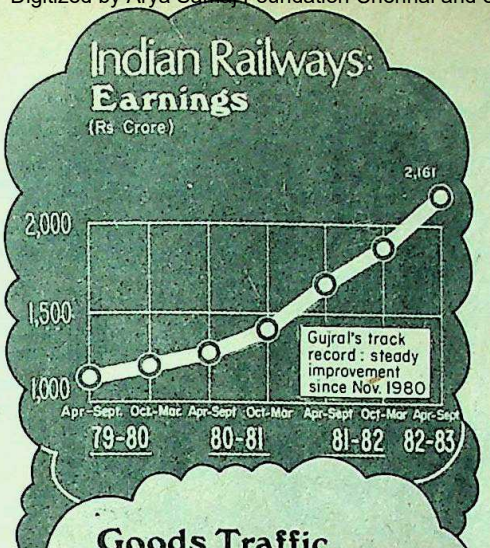
reby making it irrational to use elec- locomotives on this section. Choudhu- has also promised a luxury palace-on- eels kind of train between Calcutta and rjeeling. And the chief engineer of the dian Railway Construction Company RCON), a public sector undertaking under Railway Ministry, was ordered to ze work on a project at Farakka and ed to give jobs to local youth.

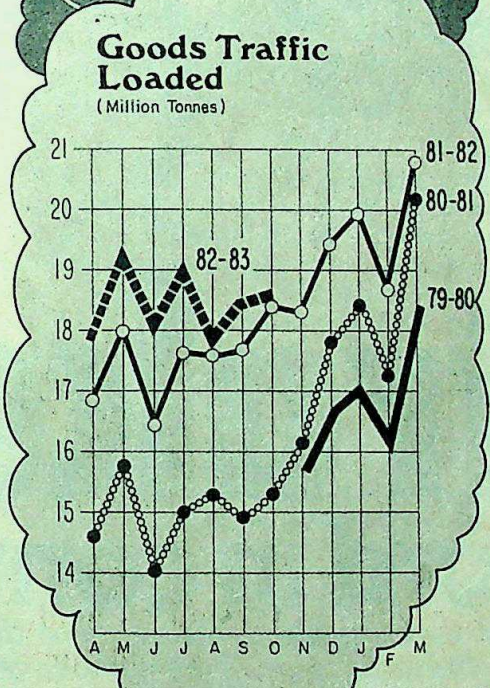
Some of Choudhury's orders have n embarrassingly counter-productive one case, he ordered that the timings of Tinsukhia Mail, running between ihi and Assam, should be changed so the train's stop at Malda would not ate in the night. Railway officials cau- ed that this was a long distance train. that changing timings would cause rational problems. But Choudhury was stent. So four stops in Bihar were can- ed in order to bring the train earlier to da. At one of the cancelled halts, Sa- ganj, local passengers then gheraoed train, and to Choudhury's embarras- nt the stop had to be restored.

In another instance, Choudhury direc- that the attaching of a coach to the rjeeling Mail should not be done at mshedpur, since this delayed the train's val at Malda. When this was imple- nted, there was a gherao again.

BUT SUCH instances have not per- suaded Choudhury to be more rea- sonable in his instructions to ficials. Varghese Anvar, general manager the southern railway, was virtually ced to go on leave less than two nths before his retirement because oudhury was annoyed at the recogni- n of a local union. It transpired later t Anvar had merely been acting on the ructions of the Minister of State for ways, C.K. Jaffar Sharief. The threat transfer that hung over Anvar's head s withdrawn, and he was able to get ck to work. In a second instance. oudhury declared in writing that V.K.J. me, general manager of IRCON, was run- the company "stupidly" and that did not "impress" him. Shortly erwards, Choudhury proceeded to omote Rane as managing director.

In one of the more bizarre directives his three-and-a-half months in office. minister ordered that ticket-checking ff should be accompanied by armed ards, who should open fire if necessary stop ticketless travel. Aghast, officials ted out the serious implications of the der, which has not been implemented. In other unbalanced response to a blem, Choudhury ordered a judicial quiry into a level crossing accident in





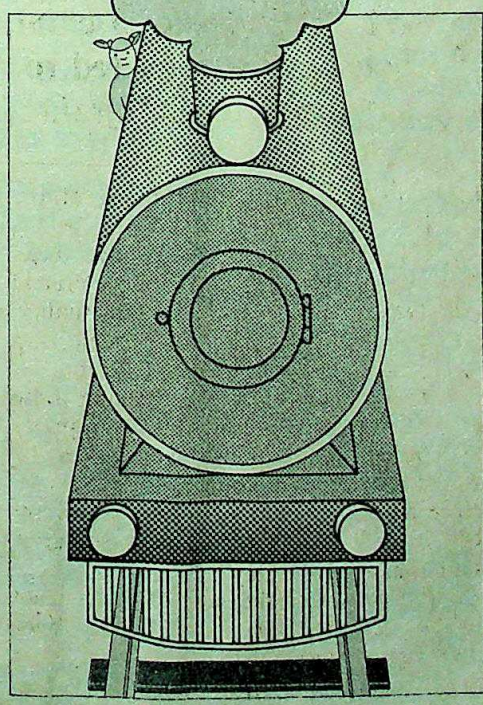


Chart by B.K. Sharma

Delhi. Officials had to point out that judicial enquiries are meant for an altogether different scale of events.

But such official baulking at his orders has only convinced Choudhury that he must teach railwaymen who is boss. When Gujral attended a meeting in the Works and Housing Ministry, called to discuss the running of the Calcutta tube railway, Choudhury was incensed and publicly hauled Gujral over the coals for acting without informing him. And it served little purpose for Gujral to point out that Choudhury, as minister, could hardly have attended a meeting called by an official of the Works and Housing Ministry.

Coal Shortage: One of the bigger confrontations has been over the cancellation of passenger trains because of a shortage of coal. Choudhury gave a Parliament commitment in October that this would not happen. So when, following the strike in the Singareni collieries, the general manager of the south-central railway was forced to cancel trains at short notice, Choudhury's anger knew no bounds. Reacting from Malda (where he spent a total of one month out of his first three as railway minister), he sent an open message over railway communication lines to Gujral, who was then in Madras, expressing his displeasure. Coal could be diverted from the power houses, he said in a later order. Though he had been the minister in charge of coal before he came to the railways, Choudhury did not know that the power stations use a different quality of coal from the steam coal used by the railways. In any case, he should have known that power stations have a higher priority in coal allotment. Various official committees have determined that there is indeed a shortage of coal, but Choudhury will not agree, and supplies have had to be curtailed sharply to industrial users (some of them now subject to a 90 per cent cut) so that the railways can build up coal stocks.

The official viewpoint is that it is because of these difficulties in implementing Choudhury's orders that he has decided to clip the railway board's wings. But while his stated objective is decentralisation, the real reason officials feel is to concentrate powers in Choudhury's own hands. Several decisions that used to be taken by field level officers—traffic patterns, for instance—now need ministerial sanction. There is another alleged purpose in the move to decentralise powers: officials lower down in the hierarchy are less likely to resist ministerial orders, however arbitrary.

One insider's assessment was that

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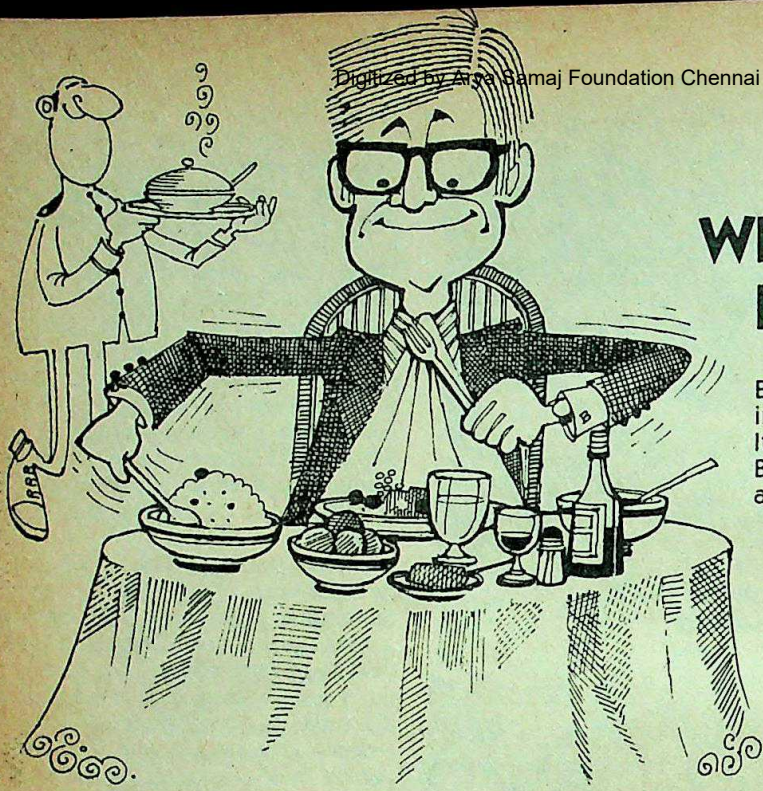

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any of Choudhury's orders are indeed ned at positive goals: improved punc- ality, safer operations, better facilities. t the specific orders are often irrational ause Choudhury does not understand railway system and has not cared to "So he has become a bull rampaging und in a china shop."

Unbecoming Squabble: In Choudhu- s defence, officials point out that Gujral s sometimes been deliberately obstruc- nist in his responses. Coal allotments to ustrial users, for instance, could have n handled better once the order was to build up railway stocks. But ral imposed a 90 per cent cut on some, only a 50 per cent cut on others.

Meanwhile, the unseemly squabble at head of the country's largest organi- ion, employing 1.8 million people, has vitably begun to take its toll lower n. Gujral is more admired than loved, his autocratic ways have not helped friends. But the discipline that he en- ced, especially among the unions, is ely to come apart if the unions perceive t his hand is now weaker. Among the cers too, many are quite happy to see ujral at the receiving end of autocratic ders. One officer pointed out that the Delhi High Court had recently passed strictures against Gujral for short-circuiting normal administrative procedures.

Still higher up the ladder, at the level of members of the railway board, jockeying has already started for the succession, since Gujral's term expires in June. But of the other four members of the board, three will retire by August. Only the financial commissioner's retirement date extends into 1984, and he is not normally eligible for the post of chairman.

While Choudhury's objective in clipping the Railway Board's wings is decentralisation, the real reason, officials feel, is to concentrate power in his own hands.

Nevertheless, at least one member of the board has been jockeying hard to replace Gujral, and Choudhury is known to have been exploiting these fissures within the board. There are outside candidates as well: P.C. Luthar, chairman of the Damodar Valley Corporation, is really a railwayman on deputation. and is believed to be lobbying for the post of chairman. But insiders give him precious little chance of success because Choudhury apparently dislikes Luthar as much as he does Gujral.

With most members of the present board due to retire in a few months, Choudhury can be expected to use the opportunity to hand-pick his new team. But Gujral himself is not averse to a second two-year extension, if he can get one. His continued presence would ensure for Mrs Gandhi that the railways remain efficient at the time of the next general election, moving enough coal, steel, cement and foodgrains to keep the economy ticking.

But Choudhury's comments at his press conference virtually put paid to such hopes. And speculation had started that Gujral might be shifted laterally, to head some other public sector organisation. Whatever the likely course of events in future, this much is clear: the collision in Rail Bhavan may cause more havoc to railway operations that any of the accidents Choudhury gets so incensed about.

—T.N. NINAN

Going Places

WHEN the allotment process for last fortnight's equity share issue by Thomas Cook finally draws to a close next March, 15 per cent of that company's share capital will stand in the name of the State Bank of India (SBI). Shortly after that, a nominee of the giant banking house will step on to Thomas Cook's board of directors, giving it a direct stake in managing the prestigious, internationally-affiliated travel agency which also handles travellers cheques and currency exchange business.

For the State Bank, the move marks a radical change from its earlier policy of investing only in subsidiary banks, or in companies where unsold shares underwritten by the bank devolved upon it. Dropping a policy which it has followed since its inception 61 years ago, the SBI will be a partner in a non-banking business house.

But officials in the country's largest bank—SBI ranks 89th in the world—explained that the investment in Thomas Cook was in fact a logical decision for the institution to take: an alliance with the giant multinational group could greatly help SBI market its services world-wide. "The investment itself is only Rs 10.5 lakh for a 15 per cent shareholding, an almost insignificant sum in the context of our total investments," said S.P. Sengupta, SBI's chief manager of merchant banking. "But we felt that the possible benefits could be very great. Cook have a network of over 1,200 branches worldwide, and are well-entrenched in both the travel and travellers cheques business. And as we are in the process of expanding our own rupee travellers cheques business, we reasoned that an association with the company could help us considerably."

Beneficial Association: SBI is already an Indian agent for the sale and servicing of Thomas Cook foreign currency travellers cheques in India. But now that the bank has become a minority partner in Cook's Indian operations, Thomas Cook overseas might agree to a reciprocal arrangement: State Bank officials hope that the multinational will use its clout in the travel business as well as its 1,200 international branches to sell SBI's rupee travellers cheques to foreign tourists. If the deal comes off, it will be a major coup for SBI, which will then be able to steal a march over rival Indian banks.

Equally important for the State Bank will be the new link with London's Midland Bank. The Thomas Cook group is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Midland (1981 assets: Rs 319,080 crore), and considerable business could come SBI's way as the association develops. Explained Sengupta: "These benefits ae very intangible, and almost impossible to quantify. But we felt that we might, by being associates of Cook, achieve a most-favoured status with Midland Bank and derive the maximum possible benefit from them."

For Thomas Cook too, the Indian connection could prove a major boon. The State Bank has over 6,500 branches in India, compared to Cook's four. And these could offer a huge base for Cook to service its clients. Cook will also, as an associate of India's largest public sector bank, command an intangible clout as the only multinational company so closely linked with a key governmental institution.

Cook was in fact as keen as SBI in making the alliance work. Last May, the company made a formal invitation to SBI, offering the bank a permanent seat on its board of directors and an active role in management, in return for the 15 per cent share ownership.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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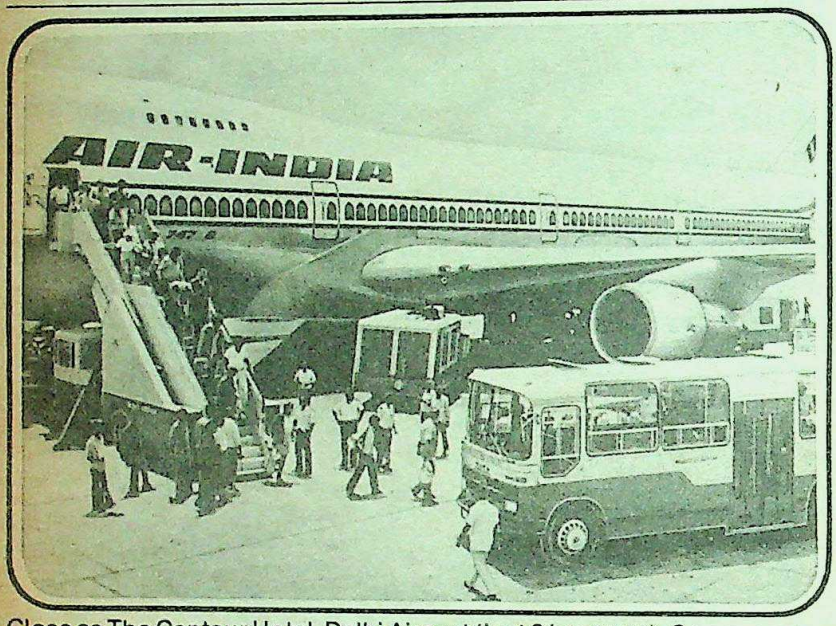

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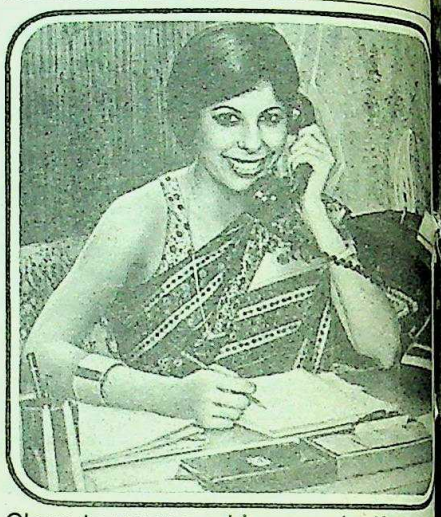

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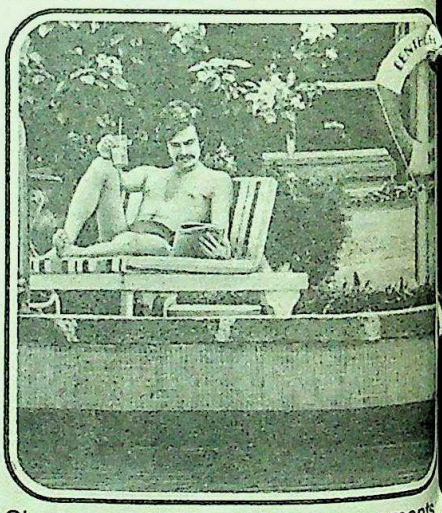

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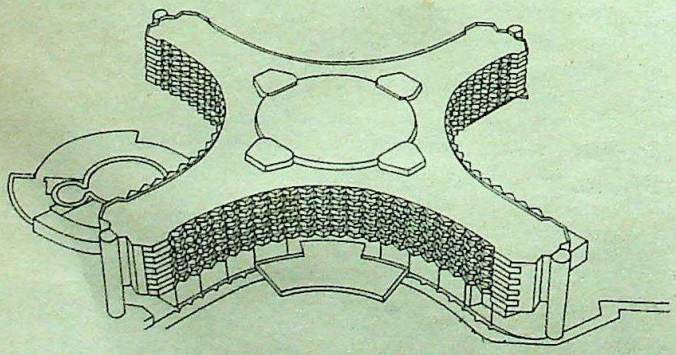

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CIGARETTES

A Taxing Puff

FOR THREE years, the cigarette industry breathed easy, while the rest of the country puffed harder than before. Spared by and large from fresh taxation, cigarette prices remained reasonably steady while consumption grew by leaps and bounds. Suddenly, however, all that has changed.

Without fanfare last month, and acting almost on the sly, the Government effected an unprecedented increase in the excise duties on cigarettes. These duties already constitute the bulk of the price of cigarettes, so that around 70 paise out of a packet price of a rupee goes to the Government as tax. The industry and trade have to make do with what remains in their hands. But by the new notification, the minimum excise duty has been virtually tripled, from 150 to 440 per cent. In the process, the graded scale of taxation, depending on the cost of the cigarettes, has been done away with, so that all cigarettes—no matter how cheap or expensive—will be taxed at the rate of 440 per cent. The second component of excise—a "specific duty" per 1,000 sticks—has been raised from Rs 22.70 to Rs 32.

Staggering Increase: The industry rocked back on its heels in surprise and consternation. Never before had it faced such a staggering increase in its tax burden. ITC, the industry leader, did not clear stocks from its factories for two weeks after the new notification, wondering how to pass on the increase to its customers. Production, at the rate of 120 million sticks a day, piled up in the godowns. And the other companies decided to wait for ITC to take the lead in announcing new prices. In the resultant famine of cigarettes on the market, a flourishing black market thrived. Retailers in some places were demanding, and getting, up to 50 per cent more than the price stamped on the packets. Smokers, unable to kick the habit, grumbled but paid up.

When the companies did finally announce their new prices, it became clear that they had chosen to absorb most of the tax increase—for the time being. "If we had passed on the full tax increase," said ITC director S.K. Mehta, "a one rupee pack would have cost Rs 1.50." Instead, ITC and most other companies have increased the price in this range by just 25 paise. "Even at this price level," said Mehta, "demand will probably fall by 10 per cent."

The rival producers were, meanwhile, trying to grab a bigger chunk of the market by withholding any increase in some brands, or by announcing smaller price hikes in the case of others. But Mehta was positive that prices would rise still further in the near future.

The new duty structure has done strange things to cigarette pricing. Since the tax increase is mostly on the cheaper cigarettes (the expensive brands were already being taxed at 440 per cent), the burden is more on the common man's smoke. In the case of ITC's brands, the cheapest brand has been subjected to a 33 per cent price hike (from 60 to 80 paise a pack), while in the upper reaches of the market the increase is just 10 per cent.

Heavy Burden: Sanjay Dalmia, president of Golden Tobacco, pointed out: "This is patently irrational. I don't even

think it was intentional. But that is how it has worked out." He explains that a cigarette pack that costs 20 paise before tax gets charged the same 32 paise "specific duty" as a pack that costs 80 paise before tax. Earlier, the graded scale of *ad valorem* duty (150 to 440 per cent) used to neutralise this, but not any more: it's 440 per cent for every brand. So the relative tax burden on the poorer smoker is heavy.

The market, meanwhile, was rife with speculation about the reasons for the sudden duty impost. While revenue-raising was certainly an important objective, the prime reason for the Government springing its unpleasant surprise lay in a bitter battle being waged in the courts by the Government and industry. The bone of contention was an excise exemption notification of March 1979, which laid down the actual rates of taxes that would be levied on the various classes of cigarettes. These rates were lower than the maximum rate of 440 per cent permitted by Parliament.

The battle started in 1981, when the Modis acquired control of Godfrey P from the American parent co Phillip Morris. Well known for the wizardry, which they had first displ Modi Rubber back in 1975, the were soon picking holes in the fine of the cigarette excise notification driving a coach and four through it less to the Government as tax. Ine the matter was soon in the court, stay order helped Godfrey Phillips to tinue to pay less as excise.

The other companies, watching the sidelines, saw new opportunities ing up, and Golden Tobacco fo Godfrey Phillips to court. Finally, too followed suit. Had the companies they would have made vast sums. A official estimated that the companies to gain a massive Rs 150 crore in th 12 months alone.

In the budget last February Government made an effort to cut sses by making amendments to the law with retrospective effect from (the year of the Modi Rubber case) companies promptly took this issue court. Said V.K. Modi, who show way for the rest of Indian industry field of excise law interpretation: laws can be changed retrospectively balance sheet becomes bogus."

Simple Step: The latest gov order now cuts through the legal with a devastatingly simple step: the ette excise exemption notification withdrawn, so that there remains no to fight about, except for past tax du the process, however, the effective ta goes up automatically to the maxim mit of 440 per cent for all.

But the cigarette companies are quite done. Before the legal tangle s the average assessable (or dutiable) of a Re 1 packet was around 18 With the new excise interpretation reduced the sum on which it paid from 18 paise to less than 10 paise. rival producers brought the pre-duty to as low as 6 paise and less. Now the Government withdrawing the ex ption notification, ITC has declare new dutiable value at around 15 pais at least one rival has held his asse value at the old level. This, appar has become a fresh matter of dispute the excise authorities, who insist th sum should logically be higher becau the Government's new order.

Many old-timers in the industry shaking their heads at these twists, a that the Government's sledgehammer at the industry would not have co companies had not tried to exploit loopholes.

—T.N.

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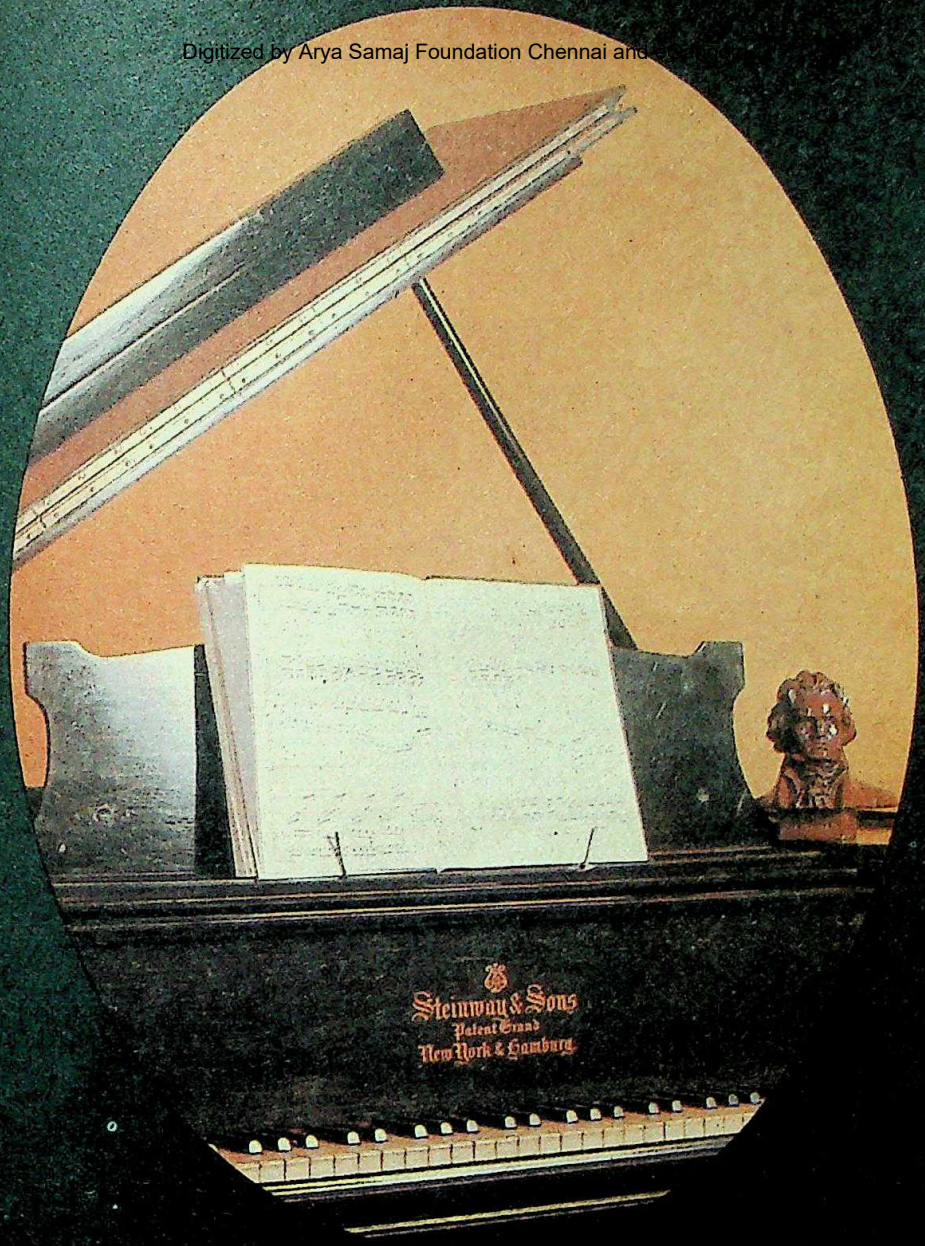

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CIDES

urious Spray

THE FARMERS of Punjab and Haryana are fighting a grim battle to protect the gains of the Green Revolution. Their crops which go such a long way to keeping the granaries of the coun- l are threatened by a man-made e—fake pesticides and insecticides flooded markets all over the two

it were not so serious some of the hat have been reported might have aughable. In one instance, in Fate- a trader was caught trying to palm diluted in water as Dimecron, a pesticide. The profits, if he had ble to get away with this little caper, have been phenomenal—ink costs 10 a litre and Dimecron sells for 0 a litre. And Fatehabad in Hissar is smack in the middle of the growing belt that stretches through na, Punjab and Rajasthan.

cept for its sheer audacity, this case unique in any way. The reports that been pouring in from agricultural tify to this. For example:

radan, a pesticide sprayed on ne and paddy was being sold in quantities in Haryana to buyers from Pradesh. The same Furadan was its way back to Haryana farmers being adulterated. Stocks bearing Pradesh Government markings were ized recently in Haryana. And unli- dealers have been detected in Dab- irsa, Bhatinda and Mukatsar.

Gurgaon firm is said to have been cing something that looks like Pla- a plant hormone used in a wide of crops like cotton, groundnuts, s, citrus fruits and apples. The wrap- is almost the same as that used by kers of Planofix but the contents of le are different. The Gurgaon almost instant success has been en- because it is offering a 50 per cent ission as against the 15 per cent of- by the real makers.

Government officials also say that a range of other fake pesticides are being brought out by unscrupulous essmen. The Punjab Government in recent months, seized stocks of ous Tolkan and Tok E-25. They say Tribunil and Dosanex, two very effec- weed killers, and Rogor which has me very popular with farmers have been adulterated.

Heavy Losses: The losses from spurious and adulterated goods are nothing short of phenomenal. Few government officials make active efforts to curb this trade and since most farmers are ill-educated they are easily duped into buying fakes or something that looks passably similar to the original. In fact, it is generally admitted that the only people who try to do anything to prevent fraud goods hitting the market are representatives of the pesticide companies.

But it is not only the balance sheets of pesticide companies that have been affected by the burgeoning trade in spurious goods. The fake pesticides are causing untold harm to crops in these states. The intensive farming that is practised in Punjab and Haryana makes crops particularly susceptible to disease. This has been aggravated by the fact that spurious pesticides are being used, and incalculable production losses are said to be taking place. What is more, diseases are being reported with increasing frequency. Philaris Minor, a deadly weed that hits wheat crops, is now becoming increasingly unmanageable.

This is not the only dimension of the problem. Experts from Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) say that crops are becoming increasingly prone to disease because of the indiscriminate use of pesticides. They say that of late wily traders have been either persuading farmers into buying the wrong pesticides or buying more than they actually need. Recently, for instance, they found that farmers were using E-25, a weed killer that is only effective against Philaris Minor, against all kinds of weeds. Similarly, in Jagraon block of Ludhiana district, farmers were found to be mixing pesticides. Such mixing often leads to the rise of new diseases.

The results of intensive cropping combined with the misuse of fertilisers is only too evident. This year leaf blight hit paddy crops in a big way. Two other diseases, Loose Smut and Karnal Bunt have also taken a toll on wheat crops, and last year more than 1 million tonnes of wheat were lost to various diseases. Says Dr Khem Singh Gill of PAU: "More and more strains of wheat are becoming vulnerable, but there is no ready answer."

Counter-productive: So far the only solution that has been found as crops grow more resistant, is to spray them even more intensively. But this can be counter-productive after a point. Punjab Agriculture Director Mukhtiar Singh claims that 80 lakh hectares have been sprayed this year as against 35 lakh hectares last year. This is still not adequate to meet the growing menace.

As yet there is no sign that the Government is going to take any effective steps to prevent the misuse and sale of fake pesticides. In fact, if anything as the traders gather more clout it appears that they are more easily able to have their way. The Punjab Government recently purchased insecticides worth Rs 22 lakh that it had earlier rejected.

Meanwhile even elementary steps are being neglected. Former Haryana agriculture minister Shamsher Singh Surjewala had two years ago suggested that licensed dealers should be allowed to sell pesticides after an agricultural officer had recommended what to use. Surjewala had also urged that the National Security Act should be used to curb these malpractices. The Government is a long way from following up such suggestions and it looks as if the problem is going to get worse before anybody takes heed. —GOBIND THUKRAL

THE MARKETS

Marking Time

WHEN you don't know what to do, the safest thing is to do nothing. This is all very well, but the safest is not always the best, not perhaps even the wisest. For nearly two months now, the share market has been marking time, sometimes going this way, sometime the other, not knowing which way to turn, or turn at all. Some scrips have done pretty well in the bargain and have surged forward beyond all expectations. Tata Chemicals, Ranbaxy, Indian Dyestuff and National Organic are good examples. Others like Escorts, Century Spinning, Ashok Leyland have moved both ways and are now more or less back in their old positions. Overall, however, the market has not done too badly and stands only a few points below the year's high.

But this is perhaps as high as it can and will go, given the signals that it is receiving from the Government and from the private sector. Businessmen are still complaining that demand for their products has not yet picked up while banks are said to be flush with money, though there are no takers. Perhaps too much should not be read into this kind of situation. Shares of motor car companies have done pretty well though the car industry itself is in something of a suspended animation. Hindustan Motors has been a very active scrip on the Delhi market and Premier Auto still makes headlines

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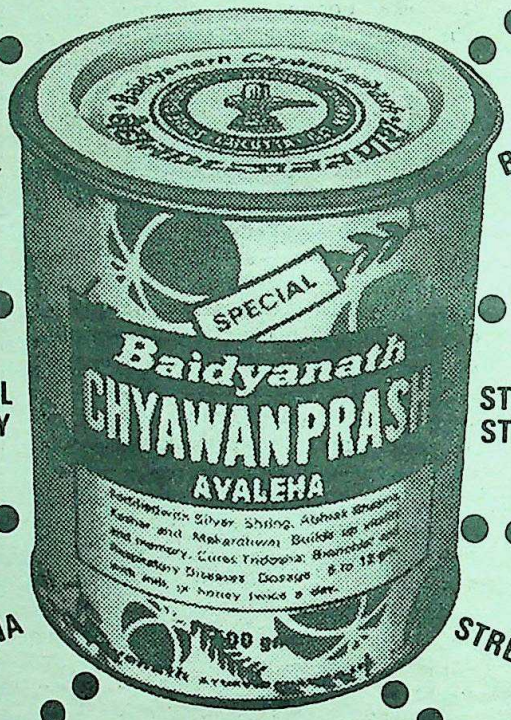
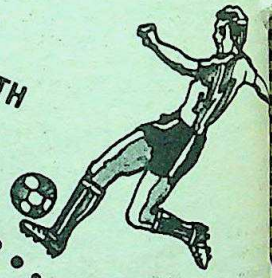


BRONCHIAL PROBLEMS

STRESS & STRAIN



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	High 1982	Low	Close 17.12.82	Change on Fortnight
Leyland	59.00	32.00	37.00	2.50
Paints	34.00	29.00	31.12	0.50
ated Cement	421.00	212.50	412.00	0.50
	1,650.00	960.00	1,240.00	(35.00)
Auto	49.60	36.00	43.20	2.20
	42.00	26.50	34.50	3.50
Gears	57.50	26.80	53.75	(2.05)
Jute	74.00	53.00	70.00	1.00
Plast	44.00	30.00	41.00	0.50
Star	80.50	62.00	75.00	1.00
y Dyeing	28.50	20.20	27.60	(0.40)
Bond	346.00	201.00	247.50	19.00
Mills	220.00	177.50	200.00	(7.50)
	1,020.00	675.00	762.50	(17.50)
Spinning	25.00	15.00	16.20	nil
cals & Fibres	58.00	41.50	56.50	(0.20)
ride India	168.00	78.00	82.50	(1.08)
	242.50	171.25	200.00	6.00
Chem	16.20	11.65	13.00	0.20
ent Dyes	44.50	31.31	32.06	(0.88)
Cloth Mills	24.30	18.30	21.20	0.40
p India	21.50	16.50	20.00	1.00
India Hotels	41.00	26.00	31.00	(0.50)
	49.87	34.25	42.37	3.18
Specialities	61.25	35.75	61.00	3.50
	48.75	25.00	25.00	(0.50)
Nylon	32.60	25.00	32.60	0.10
Electric	37.20	26.60	26.60	(1.20)
Keen Williams	506.00	368.00	475.00	(6.00)
Fertilisers	56.00	47.25	54.00	(0.25)
Lever	34.40	21.82	33.56	(0.44)
Motors	30.00	23.00	29.00	nil
Dyes	23.60	17.00	19.56	1.36
Aluminium	25.00	18.00	22.40	(0.10)
Cable	247.50	172.50	245.00	27.00
Dyestuff	26.00	18.50	22.20	(0.10)
Explosives	107.00	50.00	55.00	nil
Hotels	35.00	26.00	28.00	(0.75)
Organic	36.10	26.20	32.75	(0.35)
Oxygen	165.00	82.00	84.00	nil
ell-Rand	45.00	29.00	42.00	5.00
Exchange	42.00	21.00	40.60	1.50
	36.00	22.00	22.30	(0.40)
Tea	73.20	55.00	55.00	(3.50)
Synthetics	70.20	45.10	63.50	(2.40)
ram	160.00	94.00	155.00	(5.00)
tic Engineering	35.75	20.00	23.50	0.50
ari (Madras)	86.00	45.50	54.00	(2.50)
& Toolbro	21.65	14.50	21.50	2.75
Costs	61.00	38.00	54.00	3.00
dra & Mahindra	272.50	220.00	242.50	3.75
Industries	36.50	22.50	23.50	(2.00)
and Iron	29.00	16.50	26.25	3.95
	213.75	168.00	213.75	43.75
nal Organic	63.00	36.00	38.00	(0.25)
	48.50	34.50	47.80	0.50
Paper	30.30	26.00	28.80	(1.00)
ectronics	97.00	58.75	78.50	7.50
ala	424.00	303.00	413.00	(11.00)
r Auto	35.00	21.00	35.00	3.25
	58.25	32.50	43.50	1.00
	182.50	118.00	170.50	3.50
Wallace	35.65	27.30	34.10	nil
ram Fibres	52.12	30.00	30.37	(2.00)
	66.00	34.00	43.00	nil
	16.80	12.60	16.31	(0.19)
nia & Laxman	31.50	19.00	21.25	(2.25)
Chemicals	67.50	45.50	67.50	5.00
Steel	429.00	272.50	307.00	17.00
	737.00	367.00	450.00	7.00
nacco	70.75	35.75	36.70	(0.80)
on Carbide	28.10	23.90	25.20	0.10
Martin Black	33.50	23.50	25.20	nil
	291.00	228.00	285.00	(3.00)
ri Agro	26.50	18.35	24.10	(1.30)

in Bombay. The latter is linked with the takeover business which seems to be a new element in the Indian share market scene.

Another element, not quite new, is the spate of new issues—both equity as well as debentures—nearly all of which seem to have done pretty well. In fact, new debenture issues seem to be the main attraction and are said to be the reason for the striking mark-up in Tata Chemicals. There are also totally fresh issues like Lorcom and Thomas Cook which have also been oversubscribed. The thing to do in such cases is to pick up the new shares immediately after they are quoted on the market, or, if a friendly sharebroker is prepared to oblige, immediately on the closure of the issue. Most of the fresh issues are quite attractive—the gestation period, for instance, is often negligible which means virtually no waiting period for results—though managements are entirely new. The Lorcom issue is the first to be offered by the TTK group which handles business with a turnover of over Rs 60 crore a year. Even a small stake in such issues can lead to better things in the long run.

Corporate reports are more than satisfactory. Indian Oxygen has had a good year but is not stepping up dividend which remains more or less pegged at 20 per cent. Chloride India which had declared a bonus (2 for 5) is also said to be doing better than last year and may step up the bonus. Garware Paints has produced an encouraging report. Reports from Tisco and Telco are also satisfactory and it looks as if the worst is over for Telco, and possibly Ashok Leyland. Escorts is said to be ready to launch a new product—a scooter?—which explains last week's mark-up in its scrip.

There are, however, certain question marks. Most big houses seem to be taking it easy and very few new projects have been announced by them. DCM's light vehicle project has not yet received the green signal in respect of its collaboration with Toyota. Birlas are unusually quiet and so are most of their scrips with the sole exception of Hindustan Motors. From the Government side, there is not much activity except an assurance from the Reserve Bank governor that he might ease up on credit—for exports. Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee has said that there has been a remarkable recovery in the economy, but this probably means that the treasury is flush with money. Anyway, what you don't know doesn't hurt you, and stockbrokers are going ahead merrily with their business, which is the only way to bring in the new year.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency		TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1	As $	9.5105	9.4017
Austria	100	As Sch	58.3529	57.6148
Bahrain	1	Dinar	26.1408	25.9459
Bangladesh	100	Taka	40.7608	40.4569
Canada	1	Can $	7.9644	7.8784
Egypt	1	Egp £	11.8911	11.8024
France	1	Fr Frc	1.4485	1.4321
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.5037	1.4842
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.4383	1.4276
Iran	100	Rial	11.5650	11.4788
Italy	100	Lt Lira	0.7011	0.6931
Japan	100	Jap Yen	4.0763	4.0230
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.7895	0.7836
Kuwait	1	Dinar	33.9018	33.6490
Malaysia	1	ML $	4.2189	4.1132
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.8894	0.8828
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7460	0.7404
Netherlands		D Glds	3.7031	3.6955
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.7744	0.7687
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.5741	4.5181
Spain	100	Sp Pt	7.7351	7.6512
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4690	0.4655
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.3398	1.3261
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	4.8764	4.8161
Tanzania	1	T Sh	1.0370	1.0293
Thailand	100	Baht	42.0000	42.0000
UK	1	Pound	15.7903	15.6482
USA		US $	9.8250	9.6900
UAE	1	Dihram	2.6833	2.6633
USSR	1	Rouble	13.4311	13.3310
W. Germany	1	DM	4.0949	4.0493

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the banks on December 22, 1982.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index		
December 17, 1982*	249.1	(2.8)
Cereals	253.0	2.7
Chemicals	323.5	(5.9)
Industrial Fibres	169.9	(5.4)
Metals	346.1	(0.6)
Sugar	177.2	(6.0)
Textile Yarn	221.7	0.6
Vegetable Oils	298.7	1.2
Gold, standard, December 17, 1982 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,740.00	(5.00)
Silver, .999, December 17, 1982 (Rs per kg)	2,960.00	275.00
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index		
December 1, 1982*	244.9	4.4
Cement	249.7	0.3
Chemicals	221.6	16.6
Engineering	390.3	(3.9)
Fertilisers	208.6	15.4
Man-made fibres	400.5	(17.6)
Paper	499.1	3.6
Rubber Goods	179.1	25.0
MONEY		per cent
Money Supply, November 19, 1982		2.1
Bank Deposits		1.1
Foreign Exchange Assets		(4.8)

* 1969–70 = 100

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Brooke Bond India Limited

MR. C.S.Samuel, Chairman and Managing Director

"The increasing complexity and competitiveness in the business environment demands better quality and effectiveness in our employees of the future. This means that our successors should be better than us. This is the task of our personnel management."

Speech of the Chairman, Mr. C. S. Samuel, at the 70th Annual General Meeting on 3rd December, 1982

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the 70th Annual General Meeting of your Company.

Performance 1981-82

Your Company has once again improved on the performance of the previous year. We have had a record year with a profit of Rs. 12.96 crores in 1981-82, an increase of 22%. The gross income improved by 17% — from Rs. 183 crores in the previous year to Rs. 217 crores.

This sustained improvement in the overall performance of the Company was achieved mainly by significant increases in the domestic sales volumes. Both our tea and coffee sales recorded notable volume increases during the year. This is the first time in some years that we had our sales growing faster than the average rate of increase in domestic consumption. You will be pleased to note this trend, particularly in the context of the severe competition we have been facing in recent years from loose teas.

We have had a record year with a profit of Rs. 12.96 crores in 1981-82, an increase of 22%. The gross income improved by 17% — from Rs. 183 crores in the previous year to Rs. 217 crores.

As opposed to the encouraging results on the domestic front, our overall export performance was marginally lower than the year before. A substantial drop in our exports to Egypt — one of our major customers for tea and corned beef — mainly accounts for the lower sales. However, I am pleased to report that shipments of corned beef to Egypt have now resumed in a small way after a gap of over eighteen months.

In the context of the steadily increasing competition in West Asia, and the set back in Egypt, our maintaining the level of value added exports during the year can be considered quite satisfactory.

Last year I mentioned the major management re-organisation in the Company on the basis of Profit Centres. I am glad to say that the effectiveness of this change is well reflected in the improved results of the year. This has made it possible for your Directors to recommend a higher dividend of 22.5% this year.

I usually end my speech with thanks to my colleagues, but in view of their excellent performance last year, you will agree that it is appropriate that I do this right at the beginning. It is well known that business conditions within the country and internationally are becoming more complex, competitive and difficult in many ways. Given this environment, it is with considerable feeling and a sense of shared fulfilment that I thank my colleagues on the Board, and all our other employees in the Company for their dedication, hard work and enthusiastic support in the last year. I look forward to their continuing co-operation so that we may present to you a more successful report each successive year. I am sure you will join me in thanking [illegible] members of our Brooke [illegible] family for their contribu[illegible] the continuing success o[illegible] Company.

Profits for Growth, Growth for Profits

In the past, I have ment[illegible] the need for profits for g[illegible] I see growth as the life-[illegible] all economic well being [illegible] real growth is possible i[illegible] Corporate business in th[illegible] private sector without p[illegible] As such this is a theme [illegible] which I am always conse[illegible] This year I would like to [illegible] the prospects of profits [illegible] our recent growth and d[illegible] fication. We need profits [illegible] grow, and from that grow[illegible] get more profits, to grow [illegible] again. In the present phas[illegible] will earn [illegible] foreig[illegible] a contributi[illegible] rent financia[illegible] year of proc[illegible]

Last year, I showed some figures relevant to the p[illegible] and growth. The updated [illegible] position, as shown in the [illegible] will give you a better ass[illegible] ment of the satisfactory [illegible] progress your Company [illegible] making in our determina[illegible] achieve steady growth [illegible] profit.

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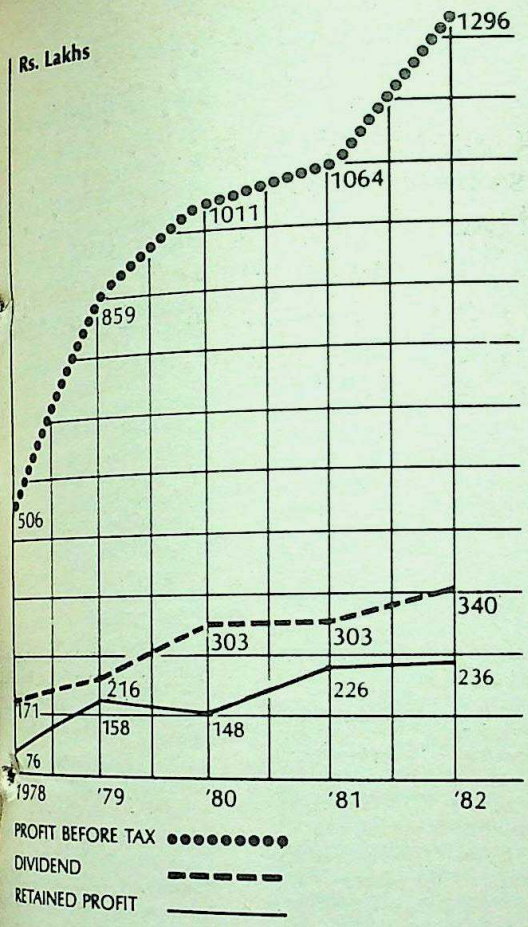
Brooke Bond India Limited



Our Leather Processing Plant at Aurangabad commenced production in June 1982. We had our first showing of finished leather at the Paris Leather Fair in September this year. Our products evoked considerable interest and the response at the Fair was favourable. We are now executing trial orders to customers in the UK and Europe. Our investment in this plant will earn some additional foreign exchange and a contribution even in the current financial year—the first year of production.

Construction of our Third Instant Coffee Plant at Hosur, Tamil Nadu, is steadily progressing on schedule. We hope that this plant will commence production by mid-1983. Last year I mentioned the approval to this project—50% of the production from this plant has to be exported, and 10% of the production has to be sold in the domestic market as pure instant coffee. These conditions are not easily attainable but we are gearing ourselves towards meeting these commitments. A new pure instant coffee with the brand name 'Brooke House' was recently launched in a few selected towns in the country. We expect a contribution from this project in the next year.

We have commenced construction of our *Paper Mill* at Bilaspur in Madhya Pradesh. The imported second hand paper machine is being overhauled, while we are obtaining other indigenous equipment. Our target is to commission this plant by end 1983. It will take some time for this project, which has a longer gestation period, to make a contribution to Company's profits.

Last year I mentioned the proposed merger of Centron with our Company in the hope that, despite the frustrating delays, Government would give a fair and just decision. We were extremely happy to receive, in January 1982, the Central Government's approval under the MRTP Act, 1969, to the merger of Centron with your Company. However, we now have problems of a different kind. The proceedings, for sanction of the scheme of merger, which are before the Bombay and Calcutta High Courts, are now taking longer than we had expected. The State Industrial and Investment Corporation of Maharashtra and United Commercial Bank have, at this late stage, chosen to consider some alternative scheme offered by the Malhotra Group. We also face the prospect of an appeal on the High Courts' decision, whenever it comes, in the Supreme Court. The attitudes of SICOM and UCO Bank are difficult to understand, particularly as they initiated this merger proposal in the first place. Also when we consider that the Government of India has authorised this merger after full consideration of all the relevant facts and opposition from Malhotras.

As you will recall, this proposal was initiated as far back as 1977 and, even after five years, we are still waiting with uncertainty about the final outcome. In the meanwhile, the losses and liabilities of Centron are steadily mounting and a sick company, which otherwise could have been gradually nursed to good health, is nearly dying because of these delays. This is an instance where we see the costs of growth, as distinct from the profits!

This leads me to the wider question of the colossal waste of national resources resulting from avoidable delays in major capital projects. It is understandable that Government control on economic growth is necessary to some extent and there will be some inevitable delay. However, procedural delays beyond a reasonable period change very many worthwhile projects into uneconomical ones. Delays in completion of projects lead to an enormous escalation in capital costs, loss of foreign exchange earnings in export oriented projects, loss of earnings to potential employees, loss of profits to Corporate bodies and even loss of revenue to Government.

In our country, there are already so many small and medium scale industries on the 'sick list', and the list is steadily growing. It is, therefore, a matter of grave concern that delays in decisions on mergers, on account of very complex and cumbersome procedures, make the revival of these sick units much more difficult. In some cases their rehabilitation becomes even impossible.

Corporate Responsibilities

You have heard me speak about our partners in business—you, our shareholders, our employees, the consumers, the community and the Government. I have said before that the primary task of management is to balance the aspirations of all these partners, keeping in mind always the common corporate good. In continuation of this theme, I would say a little about how our partners have benefited from the growth of our business in recent years.

Firstly, the dividends paid to the shareholders have more than doubled from Rs. 160 lakhs in 1977 to Rs. 340 lakhs in 1982. Moreover, during this period, your investment in the Company has also yielded significant capital appreciation. Again, the retained profits,

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which helped our diversification, has further enhanced the value of your investment. Thus, our shareholders have had a fair share in the growing prosperity of the Company.

The average earning of our employees has increased from Rs. 13,800 in 1977 to Rs. 21,100 per annum in 1982.

Secondly, our employees have had their very deserving and rightful share in our growth and prosperity. This has taken two forms—firstly, through long term wage agreements and a generous Dearness Allowance formula, the current earnings of our employees are kept at a level to enable them to have reasonably good living standards. Secondly, the Company has recognised the need, at least partially, to look after the welfare of our employees after retirement. We have, therefore, introduced a unique pension scheme to cover all the employees. The average earnings of our employees has increased from Rs. 13,800 in 1977 to Rs. 21,100 per annum in 1982. This, together with the increased retirement benefits, reflects in a large measure the share our employees have had in the growth of the Company.

As for our consumers, we strive hard to give them good value for money in terms of product satisfaction. In an inflationary economy it is natural that selling prices increase from time to time, but we have managed to keep our price increases well below the general level. We see giving satisfaction to our customers as our primary contribution to their interests.

The community is one step away from a direct link with with the Company, so it is a little more difficult to quantify our contribution to it. However, it is a fact that our existing manufacturing operations are widespread, some of them in remote villages, and our new projects are deliberately located in industrially backward districts. In this way, we get the opportunity to participate in rural uplift and to improve the economic condition of the people around the area of our operations through direct and indirect employment. We consider this our major contribution to the community around us. Needless to say we also make serious efforts to meet our social obligations in these areas through other direct inputs to improve the quality of life in the towns and villages where we operate.

Last but not least, the national and state exchequer continues to be the biggest beneficiary of our growth and increasing profits. The direct and indirect taxes paid by your Company have increased from Rs. 22 crores in 1977 to Rs. 29 crores in 1982.

In these many ways we ensure that all the partners in our business are participating, in real terms, in the growth and prosperity of the Company.

The Tea Industry

We have had varied diversification in recent years, but tea remains the main strength of our operations. For this reason, I would like also to speak to you on some of the problems of the Tea Industry in India.

From 1967 to 1977, the total tea production in the country increased from 385 million kgs. to 556 million kgs. Since then, the production has remained almost static—varying between 560—570 million kgs. Although India is the largest tea producer and consumer in the world, our per capita consumption of tea remains one of the lowest in the world. Our current annual domestic consumption of tea is about 370 m. kgs., growing by about 5% - 6% per year. If this trend of production and consumption continues, it stands to reason that before long we will eat into the exportable surplus. Perhaps by the year 2000 A.D., we will have much less tea for exports and our foreign exchange earnings from tea exports will show a major decline.

Why has the tea crop remained static during the last five years? As in other commodities, the balance between supply and demand influences prices of tea at international levels. With the supply marginally exceeding demand, the selling prices are no longer remunerative to the producer. The future seems more bleak because the scope for any appreciable improvement in yield is now limited, and there is hardly any suitable spare land available to the established producers to reduce costs by increasing the total crop. Cost escalation of all major inputs, combined with wage increases resulting from collective bargaining and static selling prices, have made tea production increasingly unprofitable. The situation has become almost unbearable because the major tea producing States seem to be competing with each other in increasing the direct and indirect levies on tea production.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Indian Tea Association a couple of years ago, I appealed to the Centre and the State Governments concerned to formulate a long term development plan for the tea industry. The objective will be to assess the supply and demand, to allocate land and funds, co-ordinate fiscal policy between the Centre and the States and to generate a real increase in production. In essence, my plea was to encourage the growth of our vital tea industry to meet our internal and export needs of 2000 A.D. I believe that these issues are still relevant and worthy of considera

In essence, my pl to encourage the g of our vital tea ind to meet our internal export needs of 20 A.D.

In recent years, a gre effort has been put in tea producing and co countries to arrive at International Tea Agre Despite some encour progress, the signing of Agreement seems to be behind time. It is hope the major tea producing countries will soon set differences and reach International Agreem regulate the supply to markets. Such an Agre can go a long way to e remunerative price to producer and a fair de consumer.

India's tea exports in were dominant in the market but today our particularly in the tra western markets, has d very significantly. Incre competition from other producing countries, th entry of China into wo markets with cheaper teas, and stagnant cons demand in some major consuming countries— affect our exports. In th context India's perform value added packet tea bag exports has been encouraging till recently by the Company's exper we are convinced that quality products blend packed in India to inte standards, when backe sustained marketing ef capable of successfully meeting competition ab However, to consolidate gains, we must have eff long term strategies and

A strong domestic ba packet tea will give Ind added strength in our d

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rsonnel Management

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ent demands better quality
and effectiveness in our employees of the future.

This means that our successors should be better than us. This is the task of our personnel management.

A special feature of our Company's age profile is that there will be a considerable number of retirements in the near future amongst our employees at all levels. These vacancies will have to be filled. In addition, the manpower needs of our new projects, which I mentioned earlier, also have to be met. There is, therefore, need to recruit and train people to fill a large number of jobs.

You would have noticed several advertisements in the papers inviting people to join us from outside. Simultaneously, we are also engaged in training and developing our people for internal succession. Our personnel function, therefore, plays a vital role in the Company, when it helps us to identify talent and potential from within and outside to meet our requirements.

One result of our changing personnel profile is the cultural change that will come about in the Company — we will be entering a phase of transition and our energies will be devoted towards managing this change. We will have to accept a large intake of people, and the new-comers will have to face the traditional Brooke Bonder. We will need to preserve the many strengths of this organisation as well as adapt to the new cultural influences that these new-comers will bring. A judicious blend of the old and the new will give us the strength and vitality much needed for the future. We are doing all we can to ensure that we use this opportunity for change to the fullest benefit of our organisation.

There are a few other issues in this connection on which I would like to share my thoughts with you. We believe as a Company, other things being equal, that we must give preference to people from within. We are engaged in selection, identification of potential, career and succession planning, so that our training and development needs at all levels in the Company are geared to meet our business goals.

We have, however, no intention of compromising on quality because, as I have said before, we believe that the quality of our people and their performance is a vital determinant of the Company's performance and future. Our task is to make sure that we are equipped with the talent, skills and knowledge necessary for our employees to take higher responsibilities. We can never do enough of this. There is, therefore, a new awareness and determination to do more and better for our employees, while we recruit people from outside where specialised experience and expertise are essential.

Cordial industrial relations have been a major factor of our success in personnel management. We are making satisfactory progress on the renewal of our agreement with our Employees' Federation. There is a healthy atmosphere of give-and-take in our negotiations. We are now in the final stage of discussion with our Federation and expect an agreement to be signed very soon. When we sign this agreement, both the Management and the Federation should be pleased to sign it.

The Future

As you are aware, Brooke Bond India is doing steadily better in its existing business. Now we will start seeing the benefits of diversification with the meat operation having settled down, leather having just gone on stream, instant coffee and paper soon to start operations. We can, therefore, look forward to a steady improvement in the growth and prosperity of the Company. Quite-apart from our present operations and diversification, we are fortunate in having a professional management team determined to do better each year, combined with a band of employees who function with dedication and team spirit, led by a progressive and responsible trade union leadership. This combination is indeed formidable, and gives me the fullest confidence and optimism for the future of your Company.

We are fortunate in having a professional management team determined to do better each year.

N.B. This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

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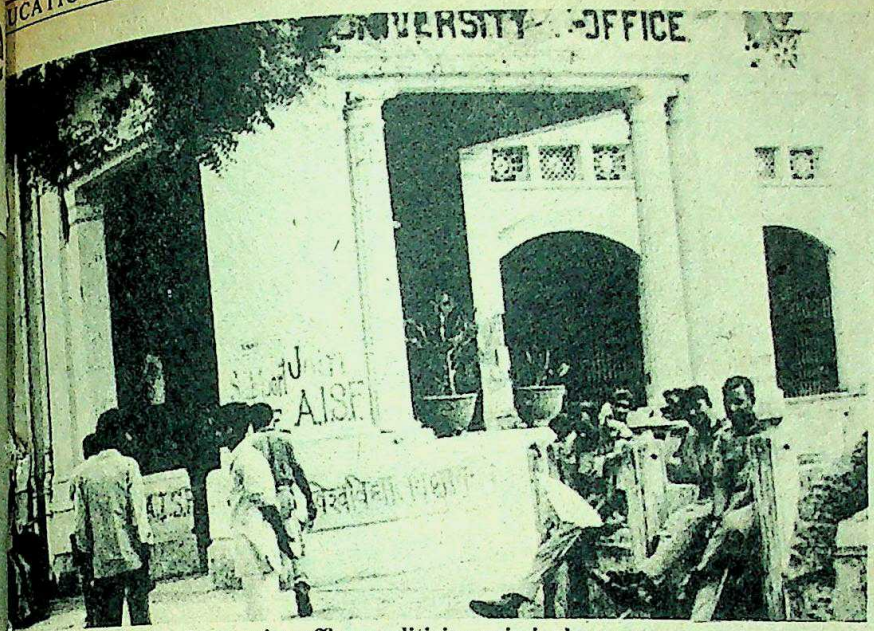


Patna University office: politician-criminal nexus

NA UNIVERSITY

riminals On Campus

T TAKES a lot to prod the Bihar Government out of its stupor. But last fortnight it was finally goaded into er three Patna University students urdered within four days and rar S.N. Mishra was assaulted by a p of students on the rampage. Declared Minister Jagannath Mishra: lessness in Patna colleges has crossed limits. The Government will utilise the nt occasion to finish off student-inals and their patrons."

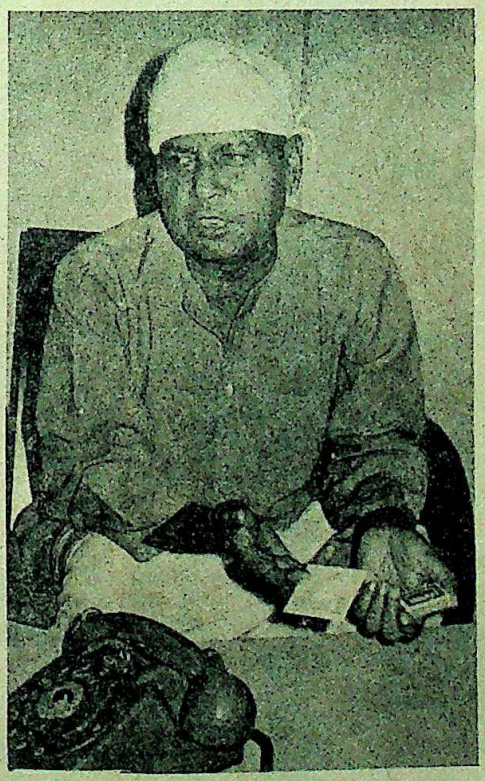
For once, Mishra was not exaggerating situation in any way. The common s of the killings show that all three killed in gang wars and had criminal ds:

Mukesh Kumar, a 4th year student in College was killed in a bomb explosion December 11. The police say he was ected of being a gun-runner;

lan Singh, a law student was shot on December 13 in Hathwa Hostel. He already been sentenced to life sonment by the Patna High Court for part in the Pipra carnage when 14 ians were shot and roasted alive in uary 1980. Lallan Singh was also said to volved in 18 murders and other criminal s; and

Ram Suresh Tripathy, a final year nt of Patna Ayurvedic College was shot on December 14. He was said to have strong links with the underworld.

In any other university such people uld not have been on the rolls. In Patna, it is hardly a matter for surprise. Says Vice-Chancellor Sudershan Prasad Singh: "The sanctity and stability of the university has been destroyed. It is tragic that hardened criminals are operating in the guise of students."



Registrar Mishra: victim of assault

Political Clout: Lallan Singh's life—and his death—give some idea of the kind of students who rule the roost in Patna University. Police describe him as a "terror in the city". He had been sentenced to life imprisonment by the High Court in August 1981. A combination of ingenuity and political clout kept him out of jail—he was declared a cancer patient and it is said that some Congress(I) leaders armed with a medical certificate were able to get him out of jail for treatment at home. One and a half months ago he managed to get admission to the Law College and on the strength of this he commandeered a room in Hathwa Hostel. Two days after he was gunned to death 900 students went in procession to demand that Hathwa Hostel should be renamed the Lallan Singh Hostel. Says Ram Chandra Khan, senior superintendent of police: "A demand is being made to give martyr's status to a character like Lallan Singh."

Lallan Singh: known criminal record

The latest casualties are not the first. In fact every year five or six students are killed and there are countless gang fights, stabbings and assaults. Senior teachers who are afraid of being quoted say that a sizeable number of students carry arms and almost every hostel has been converted into mini-arsenals. Colleges and hostels are dominated by criminals whose activities range from gun-running to bootlegging. Says a hostel superintendent: "Many rooms in the hostels near Patna College are under unauthorised occupation. We can't do anything."

The students are not the only ones at fault. Superintendent Khan, who has been conducting raids to flush out illegal arms, says that the situation could not have reached such a pass without the connivance of the teachers. Teachers are also ready to admit that many members of the teaching community have tried to pack the colleges with students belonging to their own caste and granted them undue favours when the examinations came around. The pay-off

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s when the students back them g elections.

Caste Factor: The strong casteism, everal faculty members, is the reason no vice-chancellor has survived for long. Since 1971-72 the university has eight vice-chancellors come and go. even Sudershan Prasad Singh is edly disgusted and has expressed his to be relieved of his job. Old hands on the campus the present state of af- back to the 1971 elec- when students were into the political fray. politicisation of the uni- y administration which also taken place preven- trong steps being taken to lawless elements. The year came in 1978 when eople were killed and one er narrowly survived a b blast. But, Subash Kumar, a social er who has been on the university for g time says that unruly elements with full backing of state politicians have, if thing, become more brutal and irratio- now.

Many others say that violence on the university is only a reflection of life outside. Says Patna University Teachers' Union President Shailendra Nath Shrivastava: "Patna University is not an island." Shrivastava, who is also a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA adds that: "Criminal activities in the state capital have increased manifold and so has violence on the campus." He, however, admits that accepting people who are plainly criminal has worsened matters. Professor Mujtana Hussain of the Sociology Department also adds: "Society's violence corresponds with the violence in Patna University."

Vice-Chancellor Singh: expressing disgust

Helpless Feeling: University authorities are still reeling from the violence. Registrar Mishra who was injured in the student attack admitted in an interview to All India Radio: "The university administration was feeling helpless." Says Vice-Chancellor Singh: "University officials cannot act on their own. There is no way to screen the students."

Singh points out that it was the duty of the police to have kept an eye on Lallan Singh. He denies that he has admitted students with known criminal records, and claims that he admitted only one student who was a criminal, on the recommendation of a minister, but reversed his decision as soon as he got to know the truth.

Singh adds: "A section of the teachers and more than that political parties are responsible for this crisis as both students and teachers treat the campus as a ground for a future political career." The vice-chancellor has now asked hostel superintendents to forward a list of all unauthorised residents and those with a criminal record. In addition, he has asked the district administration for a comprehensive list of all those with criminal records.

Jagannath Mishra has also resolved to purge the colleges and hostels of criminal elements. He has appealed to all political parties to come together to solve this serious problem before it gets further out of hand. But the cynics in Patna who have heard the chief minister's tall talk before are convinced that he will be the first to back down when political pressure mounts, as it cannot fail to do, given the present state of affairs on the campus.

—FARZAND AHMED

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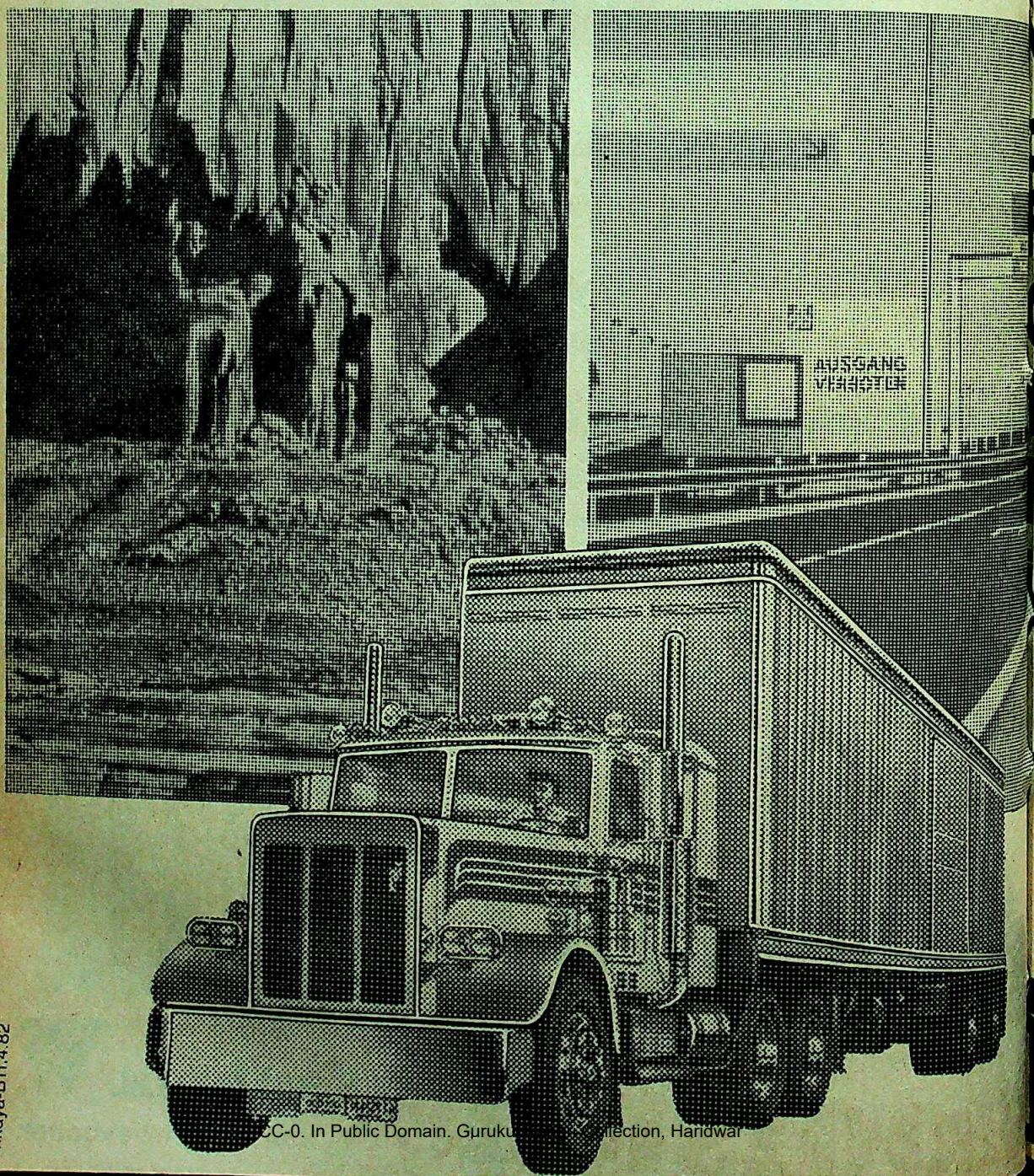

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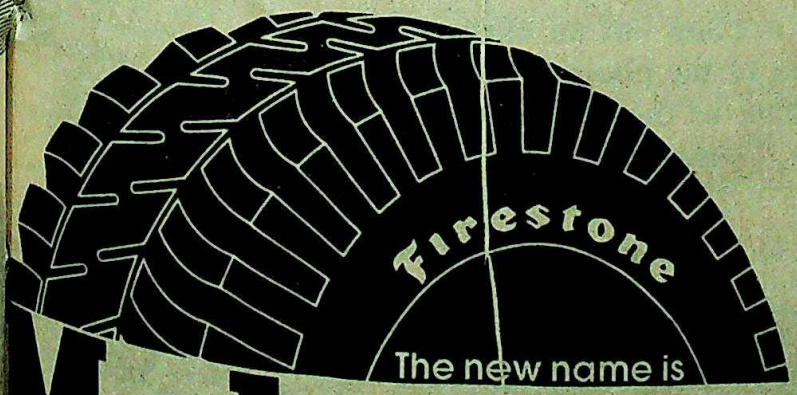

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Mishra (left) and Sinha: coming out on top

JAGANNATH MISHRA

Cleared By The Court

THE INDIA-RUBBER man, Jagannath Mishra, had done it again. For months, the Bihar chief minister's political fate had hung in the balance while the Supreme Court heard the Patna Urban Cooperative Bank case. Then, last fortnight, Mishra's fortunes took a sudden upward swing. On December 16, the Supreme Court held, by a two-one majority, that the withdrawal by Mishra's own government of Vigilance Case No. 9(2)78 against the chief minister and Nawal Kishore Sinha, ex-chairman of the urban bank, was valid and lawful. Also, the day before the judgment came, it was announced in Delhi that Mishra would lead the Indian delegation to the October Revolution celebrations in Moscow on December 20.

The urban bank case had acquired tremendous political significance in the light of Mishra's less than exemplary record in government since 1980. Nine days before the Supreme Court judgment, however, Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting N.K.P. Salve concluded discussions with journalists' bodies on the Bihar Press Bill—which had brought Mishra nation-wide notoriety—and had it sent back to Patna for 'reconsideration'. As the Bihar Legislative Assembly opened for its winter session on the very day of the judgment, Mishra's principal political foe, Karpoori Thakur, suffered another blow when the Patna High Court ruled that Speaker Radhanandan Jha was correct in stripping him of his status of Opposition.

B. Islam

R.B. Mishra

The majority of Justices Islam and Mishra agreed with Solicitor-General Parasaran that Thakur nursed a grudge against Jagannath Mishra. "Remand for trial will a mere exercise in futility and it will be nothing but an abuse of the process of the court to remand the case to the trial court," they said.

It was during Thakur's Janat that the criminal case had be against Mishra. The majority of Baharul Islam and R.B. Mishra with Solicitor-General K. Parasar was the Bihar Government's coun

Thakur nursed a against Jagannath and that D.P. Ojha superintendent of p charge of the Vigila partment had institu urban bank case Mishra, had been ap to that post despite b dicted for dereliction in the L.N. Mishra case by the K.K. Commission. "Remand trial", said Justice and Mishra, "will be exercise in futility, will be nothing but a of the process of th to remand the case trial court."

Vested Powers: The petition the Supreme Court, filed by Bih Dal (K) MLA Sheo Nandan Paswa ved around Section 321 of the C Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC reads: "The Public Prosecutor or A Public Prosecutor in charge of a c

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the consent of the Court, at any time
e the judgment is pronounced, with-
from the prosecution of any person
generally or in respect of any one or
of the offences for which he is
."

The point at issue was whether or not
Government could use the powers
in it by Section 321 of the CrPC to
draw a case against anybody. On June
981, the special judge hearing the case
ed its withdrawal after Special Public
cutor Lalan Prasad Sinha argued
the withdrawal was necessary on four
ds—lack of prospect of successful
ution in the light of the evidence,
ation of the accused as a result of
cal and personal vendetta, inexpe-
y of the prosecution for the reasons
te and public policy, and adverse ef-
that the continuance of the prosecu-
would bring on public interest in the
of the changed situation.

Technically, the special judge interpre-
ection 321 in its acutely legal sense.
precedent he quoted was in the *R.K.*
s The State case, where the petitioner
challenged, in the Supreme Court, the
drawal of the Baroda Dynamite case
nst George Fernandes and others by
Janata government, and of four cases
nst former defence minister Bansi Lal
Congress(I) Government after it re-
to power in 1980.

Legal Precedent: The Supreme Court
then upheld the withdrawal of the
on the ground that the offences alle-
committed by Fernandes and others
of a political character—the motive of
accused being that they
ed to change the
gency government of
a Gandhi—and, in Bansi
case, that the argument
ucity of evidence was
ed and in one of the four
the complainant had
suitably and profitably
pensated.

Justices Islam and
accepted the R.K.
Precedent as a principle
er enunciated by their
, but Justice V.D. Tul-
rkar, who presided over
bench, delivered a judg-
in sharp contrast to
of his fellow judges, not merely in its
h but also in its attention to the con-
ted course the case had taken since 1975.
apurkar held that though withdrawal of
ecution under Section 321 is an exec-
e function of the public prosecutor for
h statutory discretion is vested in him,
discretion is neither absolute nor unre-
viewable but it is subject to the Court's supervisory function".

Quoting from the Supreme Court's judgment in *State of Bihar vs Ram Naresh Pandey*, Justice Tulzapurkar observed that in cases of withdrawal of prosecution, "the court has to satisfy itself that the executive function of the Public Prosecutor has not been improperly exercised, or that it is not an attempt to interfere with the normal course of justice for illegitimate reasons or purposes". In *State of Orissa vs Chandrika Mohapatra*, the Supreme Court had ruled that where prosecution was sought to be withdrawn, "the ultimate guiding consideration must always be the interest of administration of justice".

TULZAPURKAR also brought out two important principles enunciated in the R.K. Jain case. In the first place, he said, the court had to consider "whether the Public Prosecutor applied his mind as a free agent, uninfluenced by irrelevant and extraneous considerations". Secondly, in the R.K. Jain judgment the court had observed: "The court has a responsibility and a stake in the administration of criminal justice and so has the Public Prosecutor, its 'Minister of Justice'. Both have a duty to protect the administration of criminal justice against possible misuse or abuse by the executive by resort to the provisions of Section 321 CrPC."

"No results of any election, howsoever sweeping, can be construed as the people's mandate to condone or compound the common law crimes allegedly committed by those who have been returned to power... success at the hustings is no licence to sweep all dirt under the carpet and enjoy its fruits nonchalantly."

—Justice V.D. Tulzapurkar

Justice Tulzapurkar, disagreeing with Justices Islam and Mishra, held that the offences Jagannath Mishra and his co-accused were charged with were not political in nature. On the contary, he said, no "public interest" had been endangered by the prosecution, and the "ordinary common law crimes" the accused were alleged to have committed were not followed by "any mass agitation or communal frenzy or regional dispute or industrial conflict or student unrest".

The crucial loophole lay in the fact that Section 321 of the CrPC does not distinguish between political and criminal offences. "Yet," said Supreme Court lawyer and Bharatiya Janata Party Vice-President Ram Jethmalani, "the distinction does exist, and political offences are a well-recognised category both in international and domestic law. In a society governed by the rule of law you cannot condone moral turpitude. If we accept the judgment it will mean that we can never punish corruption in high places."

Wrong Legitimisation: Justice Tulzapurkar expanded on this when he said: "No results of any election, howsoever sweeping, can be construed as the people's mandate to condone or compound the common law crimes allegedly committed by those who have been returned to power... success at the hustings is no licence to sweep all dirt under the carpet and enjoy its fruits nonchalantly."

Lalit Bhasin, vice-chairman of the All India Congress Committee(I)'s legal cell, agreed with the majority judgment. "The Supreme Court," he said, "has merely used the correct legal position in the R.K. Jain case. There is no such thing as a political offence. All offences come under the Indian Penal Code. The decision to withdraw prosecution is political."

Bhasin had a point when he stated that there was no legal issue of great importance involved in the urban bank case. "The petitioner Sheo Nandan Paswan," he said, "never made it a plea that the court should reconsider its own judgment in the R.K. Jain case. Section 321 of the CrPC presupposes a double safeguard, whereby both the public prosecutor and the court independently apply their minds."

Unusual Circumstances: However V.M. Tarkunde, who had argued in the R.K. Jain case, felt that the court's decision last fortnight was wrong. "In George Fernandes's case," he pointed out, "the argument was that during the Emergency, democratic rights were unavailable, and so

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nts of the regime resorted to un-
tional methods. Surely in that case
tion could not continue after the
ment changed. Moreover, the
al case was tagged on to the Fer-
case withdrawal because of some
noeuvring."

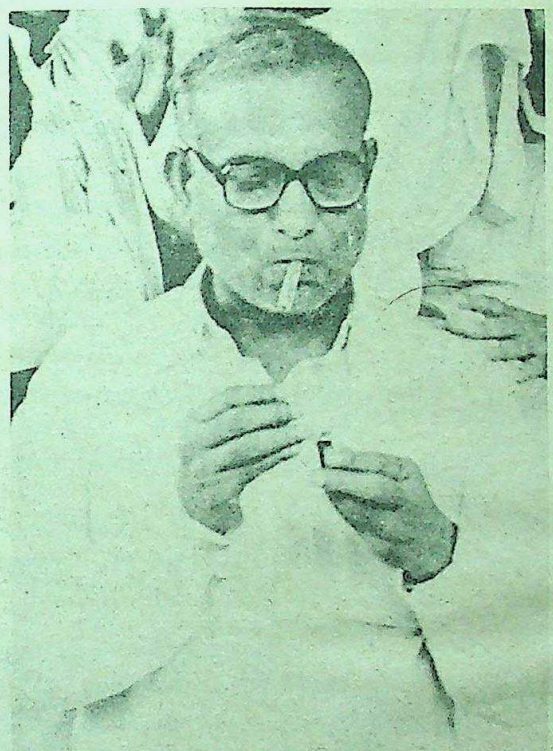
e urban bank case in the Supreme
had been dogged from the beginning
troversy. Justice D.A. Desai and
Mishra originally admitted Pas-
appeal on April 20 last year and
uly 19 for the next hearing. Two
before that, however, Justice
h his wife, along with Justice P.N.
i, visited Patna to attend a sym-
organised by the Bihar State Legal
Board. Jagannath Mishra's
ment offered to put its airplane
disposal so that they could visit
Gaya and Nalanda, but the ju-
ware by then that Mishra was
to embarrass them, refused.
owever shared a breakfast with
and at a lunch hosted by the
Mishra made it a point to pay
ous attention to justice Desai.
e event was noticed, and photo-
of Justice Desai with Jagannath
were printed in the newspapers.
d to unseemly speculation about
rse the imminent urban bank
would take. Eventually, the
Court postponed hearings to
5, and Justice Desai was repla-
the bench by Justices Tulzapur-
d Islam.

HE URBAN bank hearings ex-
tended over eight days between
October 5 and 19. A week before
dgment was delivered, Justices
rkar and Islam had finalised
spective verdicts, and copies
ent to Justice Mishra. Yet,
TODAY learnt, until 8.30 a.m. on
rning of the judgment, neither of
other judges had had any inkling
h side in the tie Justice Mishra had
deciding verdict on.

hearings in the Supreme Court
ew up all the evidence gathered
the lengthy investigation of the
bank case. Here, too, after exami-
he facts, Tulzapurkar ruled: "The
entary evidence, the genuineness of
cannot be doubted, clearly makes
prima facie case against (Jagannath
a) sufficient to put him on trial for
ence of criminal misconduct under
n 5(1) (d) read with Section 5(2) of
evention of Corruption Act, 1947.
is the position with regard to the
tal offence of forgery under Section
dian Penal Code."

December 16 was a gloomy day for Jagannath Mishra's opponents, both within the Congress(I) and outside. The heat generated by the urban bank case and the Bihar Press Bill controversy had encouraged dissidents in the state ruling party. The judgment was followed by the suspension of Bihar dissident leader Ashwani Kumar Sharma from the Congress(I).

Swift Revenge: Two days later, minutes before a jubilant Mishra flew to Delhi *en route* to Moscow, Sudhish Narain Singh, an inspector-general rank police officer who was the chairman and managing director of the Bihar State Police Construction Corporation (BSPCC) was unceremoniously stripped of his duties. In 1980, when Singh was inspector-general of the Vigilance Department, he had refused to withdraw the urban bank case after Jagannath Mishra returned to power. In February last year, after he was superseded as inspector-general of Bihar, Singh had to obtain a high court injunction in order to get his BSPCC posting.



Paswan: "The judiciary has lost, not me"

Sheo Nandan Paswan, the man who had filed the abortive appeal, was not surprised by the judgment. "If anyone has lost because of this judgment," he said, "it is the judiciary. Let the people judge the judgment."

Happiest of all, of course, was Nawal Kishore Sinha, the ex-chairman of the Patna Urban Cooperative Bank. At the height of the uproar over the bank's affairs in 1975, he had been pointedly rewarded with the additional posts of chairmanship of the state Tubewells Corporation and chairmanship of the Patna Regional Development Authority. At one point, it transpired, his bank had given a loan to a certain Krishna Gopal Singh, who furnished as security Patna's huge Gandhi Maidan and platform 4 of the Patna Railway Station.

"We had an idea from the very beginning," said Sinha, "that the verdict would be in our favour. The Supreme Court judgment has proved that truth finally triumphs." The urban bank was liquidated in 1976, but Sinha's star has not plunged. Under his friend Jagannath Mishra's generous dispensation, Sinha currently held the chairmanship of the Patna District Board and was the president of the Pradesh Congress(I)'s Agriculture Cell.

Sharp Criticism: The larger implications of Jagannath Mishra's reprieve, however, drew sharp comment from editorialists and legal experts. Said former additional solicitor-general Soli Sorabjee: "The judgment is unfortunate. It will result in the common man becoming cynical about law, and about the administration of criminal justice. Moreover, the reasoning of the majority judgments that evidence against Mishra would not be forthcoming if the case were sent back to trial court is very strange. It means that no chief minister or minister can ever be arraigned on criminal charges."

Added Jethmalani: "The Supreme Court has laid down a very evil precedent. Since persons in high places cannot be prosecuted, it means that they can be prosecuted only when they are out of power. So every time the argument will be made that the case arises out of political vendetta." Upendra Baxi, legal scholar and currently vice-chancellor of the South Gujarat University, feared that "Adjudication on high political matters will be tainted with the suspicion of being 'indirect adjudication', that is the shaping of judicial outcomes by promises and pressures outside the courtroom and the Constitution."

The *Indian Express* summed up the case in a telling editorial: "It is not that Jagannath Mishra was being pronounced guilty. He was being offered the opportunity of a fair trial and used his authority as chief minister to scuttle the case. The Supreme Court's judgment ends the matter. But for many, Jagannath Mishra will remain an undertrial at large."

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

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Fighting For A Cause

THE SALARIED middle classes have time and again fallen prey to the Government's more capricious economic decisions. But, one group that has suffered the most from constantly rising costs of living is the large, amorphous mass of the nation's pensioners. Bereft of a common voice, nearly three million retired government employees and defence personnel have helplessly watched their pensions shrink in real value as the consumer price index sky-rockets.

Until 1980, that is, when Common Cause, a Delhi-based organisation "for ventilating common problems of the people", decided to fight on behalf of the pensioners. Its director Hari Dev Shourie, 70, himself a pensioner, says the last straw for him came when the Central Government announced pension liberalisation rules in May 1979—but made the enhanced pensions applicable only to those who retired on or after April 1, 1979.

Last fortnight, a five-member constitution bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Y.V. Chandrachud handed down a judgment on a petition filed by Common Cause that was at once an indictment of the cynical underpinnings of a welfare state and a sharp rebuke for the Government's arbitrariness. Ruling that all pensioners, irrespective of their dates of retirement, were entitled to the liberalised rates of pension, the unanimous 65-page judgment said that the eligibility criteria were arbitrary, and that "the old men who retired when emoluments were comparatively low are exposed to (the) vagaries of continuously rising prices and the falling value of the rupee consequent on inflationary inputs" deserved a better deal.

Ignored: Common Cause's petition had capped a fruitless period in which pensioners' associations across the country called in deputations on Union ministers, fired off countless memoranda, and deposed before parliament's committee on petitions. In 1973, too, when pension rules were liberalised, pre-1973 retirees had been implicitly excluded from those benefits. Said the Supreme Court: "If the state considered it necessary to liberalise the pension scheme, we find no rational principle behind it for granting these benefits only to those who retired subsequent to a date and denying the same to those who retired prior to that date."

The judgment brought immediate relief to at least one million pensioners throughout the country, and ought to carry spin-offs for an additional two million state government pensioners. The Government argued in vain that a favourable verdict would impose an additional annual burden of Rs 233 crore. Calculations showed, said the judgment, that the burden would not exceed Rs 51 crore annually, and with more and more pensioners dying every year, it would progressively lessen.

There had also been anomalies in pension ceilings. The 1973 liberalisation had raised the maximum pension to Rs 1,000 a month, whereas pre-1973 pensioners could draw a maximum of only Rs 675—and the 1979 liberalisation raised this limit to Rs 1,500. The judgment will now equalise pension ceilings.

"If the state considered it necessary to liberalise the pension scheme, we find no rational principle behind it for granting these benefits only to those who retired subsequent to a date and denying the same to those who retired prior to that date."

A retired director-general of the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, Shourie points out that the Congress(I)'s election manifesto in 1980 prominently carried a promise to look after the "interests and comforts of pensioners". Yet, a private member's bill introduced by ruling party member V.S. Gadgil in the Lok Sabha last year was withdrawn by the mover himself after a desultory debate on pensioners' woes.

Linking Inflation: Although the voluminous Central Civil Service Rules, 1972, and the Army Pe lations codify all existing pens nes, further ensnaring people w ing lives have been circumscrib and red tape, the Government woken to the realities of the 1970s. In England, the Pensio Act of 1971 provided for multi previous years' pensions in ord them in line with rising costs. bi-annual review of all subsid sions and their linkage to the co index. India stands in stark co reover, to 47 other countries Asia, the Americas and Easte that have linked pensions to th living index. In 1980–81, the bu sions for civil and defence pens led only Rs 280 crore.

Shourie points out othe shortcomings in the Government policies. In order to meet their quirements after retirement, ployees can claim up to a third ce personnel half, of the pensi them for ten years in a lump sum mutation'. Technically the Gov obliged to pay full pensions afte year period, but it has seized u ties to continue to deduct o 'commuted pensio afterwards.

Dozens of let mon Cause has rece to the deprivation s commuted pension most moving is Amrit Lal of Jullu is 85 years old and only with a shaky th Lal retired as a civ rintendent from Ar quarters in April February 1960 he and got, a com lump sum of Rs 9,7 the Government's relentless de one-third of Lal's pension has his repaying Rs 24,750.

The Government's specious says Shourie, is that if a pen commutation and then dies ten-year period is over, it loses cannot be expected to under tractual obligations to those beyond that period. In fact, governments have already insti whereby a commuted pensio beyond the age of 70 is aut restored to full pension.

Family Pensions: "Don't s ties in a welfare state illustrate ness, disregard and apathy on the politicians and the bureaucr

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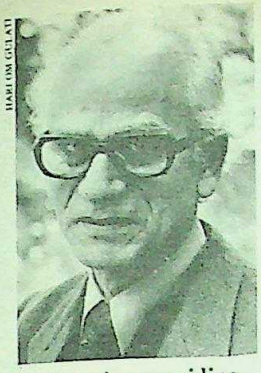
Common Cause is
aking up the cause of
ners' widows. The fami-
f pensioners who died
977 get a maximum 'fa-
ension' of Rs 250. But
milies of those who died
n 1964 and 1977 get a
um of only Rs 150—
re-1964, nothing at all.
entations to the Gover-
says Shourie, have
the response that it is
ifficult to locate decea-
sioners' families.



Shourie: providing a forum

rking from his home
small part-time staff, Shourie and
on Cause illustrate the usefulness of
re and crusading "platform for the
classes". A few months ago,
on Cause notched up another victo-
n its 18-month campaign resulted in
endment of the Estate Duty Act to
for evaluation of property at
71 prices. "Until then," says Shou-
state duty on a deceased house-
's property was levied on its prevai-
market value, and no family could
to pay such high sums."

Common Cause has also been fighting against the insensitivity of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). The MCD for instance levies property tax on house-owners on the basis of the actual rent they receive from tenants. In December 1979 the Supreme Court decided a case in regard to the New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC), which administers a privileged pocket in the capital, ruling that property tax could be based only on the standard rent payable under the Rent Control Act. More than 100 house-owners' associations in the MCD jurisdiction that are affiliated to Common Cause have been advised to quote that judgment to house-tax inspectors. When the Lok Sabha took up a Municipal Laws Amendment Act in August 1980 to circumvent the judgment, a vociferous agitation from the capital's house-owners ensued, and nothing has been heard since.

Currently, the organisation is fighting another case in the Supreme Court against the MCD. The bizarre division of the capital into two municipal jurisdictions has led to a situation where house-owners in the MCD area have to pay a tax of 30 per cent on rateable values above Rs 25,000, whereas the same tax in the NDMC area is only 12.5 per cent, and Common Cause is contesting this discrimination.

Shourie went to the Supreme Court only after trying every other possibility —submissions to Delhi's Lieutenant-Governor, to the MCD, to the Works and Housing Ministry, and finally to Parliament's Petitions Committee. The MCD has submitted that its higher tax rate is necessitated by the extra burden it bears as in the case of Delhi's *jhuggi* and resettlement colonies, which do not pay house taxes—and that a reduction in tax rates would mean a loss of Rs 11 crore. Common Cause promptly showed that the actual loss would not exceed Rs 1.5 crore.

Surrounded by files and circulars, Shourie has a host of other common causes on his slate. "There is satisfaction in showing the Government that the citizenry isn't asleep," he says. That sentiment was echoed by hundreds of relieved pensioners who got on the telephone last fortnight to congratulate him. —CHAITANYA KALBAG

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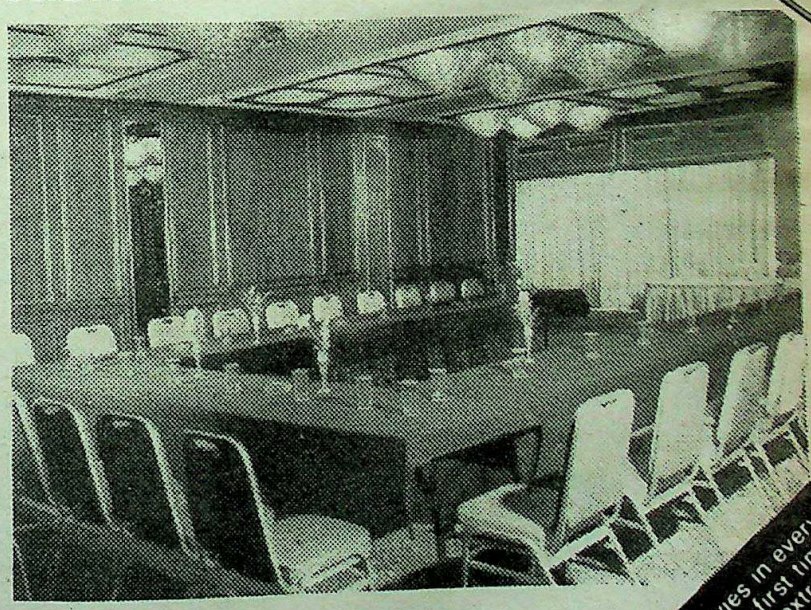

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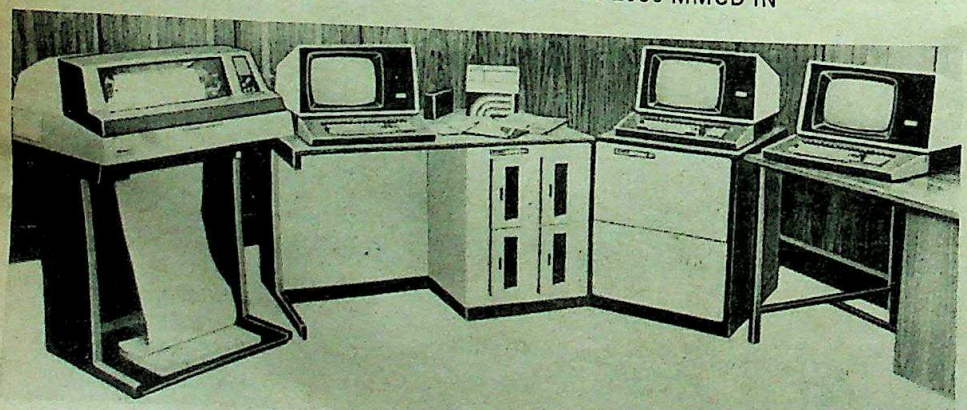

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YA PRADESH

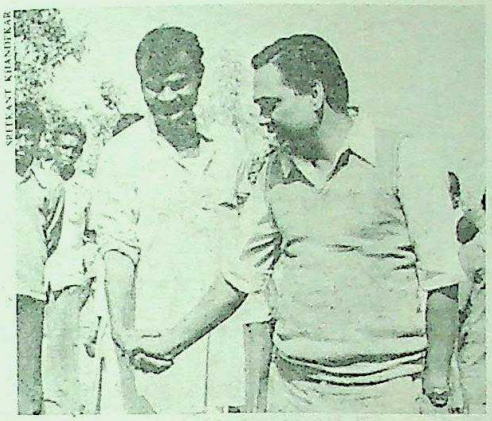
Trial Of Strength

SO OFTEN in the past, a local hero—the very stuff of the imagery of popular protest—has come to se the contentious claims of rival ents. In a major trial of strength the ruling Congress(I) and a local leader last fortnight, the mining of Dalli Rajhara in south-eastern Pradesh was astir with mammoth ies staged in memory of popular Veer Narayan Singh who was d in 1857. Coming together for the e were two well-known activists: leader Sharad Joshi and trade un- Shankar Guha Niyogi.

th the two groups vying with each recall the exploits of the martyr, in Dalli Rajhara grew to a point iolent confrontation seemed a cer- On the side of Niyogi's arch rival, dustry Minister Jhumuklal Bhedia, ligned with Chief Minister Arjun hree ministers, 21 legislators, Seva olunteers and Adivasi Vikas d (AVP) members. Pooling their with Niyogi's Chhattisgarh Mines k Sangh (CMSS) were Gandhian ayar, Sharad Joshi and former nister Purushottam Kaushik.

the two processions proceeded their allotted routes, the town slo- a standstill. Adding to the drama citement, Chief Minister Singh ar- in his helicopter at three in the after- Said a local shopkeeper: "Frankly, the mood, I was more surprised at ce than I would have been at the had it erupted." The AVP rally uickly, but the dying sun was to a sea of red and green—the CMSS —at Niyogi's rally. In the im- showing in which close to a people were involved from both most estimates put Niyogi as the And this despite the advantage the cking afforded Bhedia.

Record: Niyogi, who was arres- ring the Emergency and released after, formed the CMSS when 8,000 s broke away from a union af- to the All India Trade Union ess (AITUC) at Dalli Rajhara, which es iron ore to the Bhilai Steel Plant, away. He really shot to fame in 1977 when, following a strike, wor- sisted his arrest and 11 were killed the police opened fire. He has con- been at odds with the adminis- whether Congress or Janata, and ruary 1981 he was arrested under



SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

Niyogi (left) and Joshi (in the foretront): helping hand

the National Security Act (*see* INDIA TODAY, June 1–15, 1981). However, he was released on the order of the Madhya Pradesh High Court's Advisory Board which found the grounds for his detention inadequate.

Bhedia and Niyogi got along during the Janata regime but split in the 1980 Assembly elections. With Dalli Rajhara falling in Bhedia's constituency, the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM) fielded a candidate against him. In an additional development, three years ago when Niyogi was looking for a local hero who would symbolise the battle against oppression, he seized on Narayan Singh. On December 19, 1979, Niyogi and his union (CMSS) and the mass organisation (CMM) observed martyrs' day in Raipur. Shifting the venue in 1980 and 1981, they held functions on this day at Balod, a small town 25 km from Dalli Rajhara which was, significantly, Bhedia's home town.

Said Bhedia: "As long as Niyogi was concerned with fighting exploitation of labour, I supported him—after all our party's Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) had totally failed in Dalli Rajhara. But now his intentions are clear: if he seeks the assistance of politicians who are opposed to me, how can I take it lying down?"

SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

Bhedia: strong backing

Niyogi however parried that the celebrations at Balod were not for political reasons. Said he: "Ideally we would have liked to hold functions in different towns each year, but the logistics of carrying so many people could not be worked out. And so Balod." With Bhedia unconvinced, this year the Congress(I) under the garb of the AVP also decided to remember Narayan Singh—at Dalli Rajhara. Unabashedly Bhedia said: "Yes, you could say that the rally in Rajhara was organised in retaliation for the ones that took place at Balod for the last two years."

Important Alliance: The convincing fashion in which this thrust was countered was itself significant. The Joshi-Niyogi meeting took place at the suggestion of Vinay Hardikar, a Bombay-based journalist and a close friend of Joshi's who first met Niyogi earlier this year. Said Joshi: "I have always maintained that a broad-based front is required. In fact, in the past, trade unions have come to our assistance often—particularly during the milk agitation. Also, while there is a great difference in organising labour and farmers, it is also true that the two groups are closer emotionally than is imagined. Most industrial workers have rural backgrounds... and it is sensible to organise the two sections together."

Said Niyogi of the meeting: "Before he came, I was apprehensive slightly, because I thought that after all he had supported the cause of the rich peasants. But I was glad that his thinking is radical."

In fact the whole episode was probably a tactical error on the Congress(I)'s part. The mere fact that Bhedia had thought it necessary to assemble such a big force of leaders only for Niyogi could in itself only add to his stature. Also, the administration's sudden espousal of Narayan Singh—including naming a reservoir after him—in Niyogi's footsteps had made them look absurd Niyogi, an intense man, claimed that apart from his union's membership of 10,000, other affiliated organisations—among labourers and villagers of outlying areas—also claim another 10,000 members. Said he: "We could expand much faster, but what is the point? Unions in other nearby districts want to merge with us, but unless our base here is consolidated, unless we have made a qualitative improvement here, we don't want to spread out."

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Dalli Rajhara

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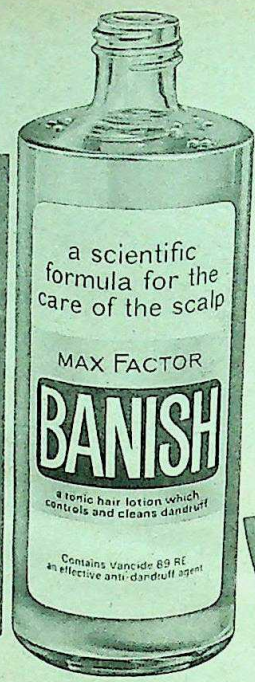

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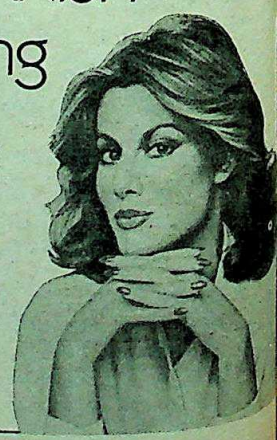

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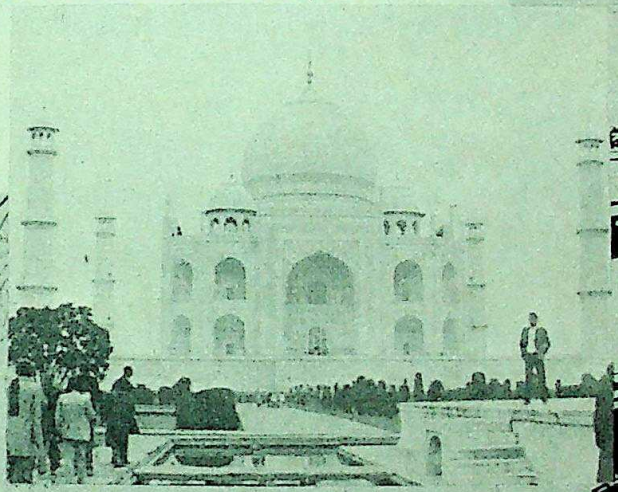
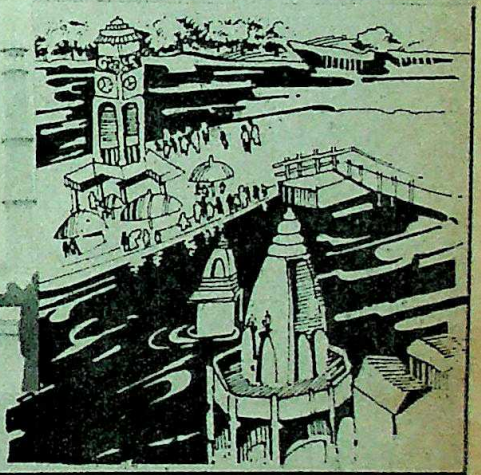
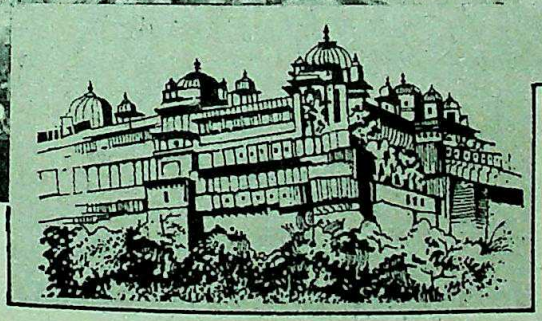
NOW: Situated on both banks of the river Gomti, it s its name from Lakshman, the brother of Lord Rama. of gardens, parks, and palaces, Lucknow retains its old- d charm and is famed for its exquisite courtesy and chikan- embroidery. The Great Imambara with its enormous ed hall, the Turkish Gate with its expressive architecture the Residency with its canon-shot ridden walls are just a of the many sights end importance to now as a major st attraction.







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EXHIBITION

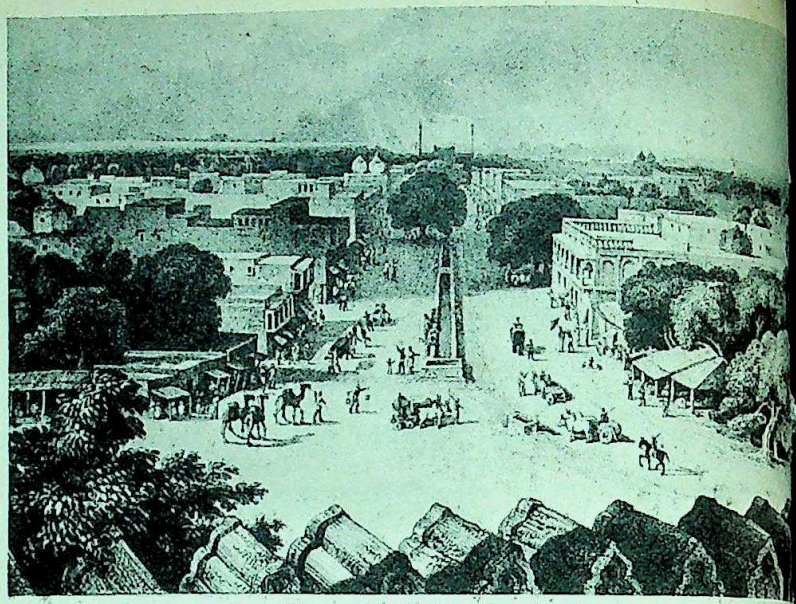
Treasure Trove

FOR THE seasoned collector it was a rare glimpse of a quaint world. And for the uninitiated a source of new interest and a sense of history unearthed. Last fortnight, when Puratan, one of the capital's leading collectors and exhibitors held an exhibition-cum-sale of antique maps and views of India, they threw open a window with canvases covering the early 16th, 18th and 19th century.

The exhibition organised at Puratan director O.P. Jain's house, had a collection of 130 maps and a sizeable collection of lithographs portraying magnificent views of India drawn and engraved by renowned artists and engravers mainly from Holland, France, Italy and England. The prints are by no means copies but are originals of their period. The art of illustration by engraving reached its zenith during the Victorian era and flourished until the middle of the 19th century, only to be replaced by photography at the tail-end of the century.

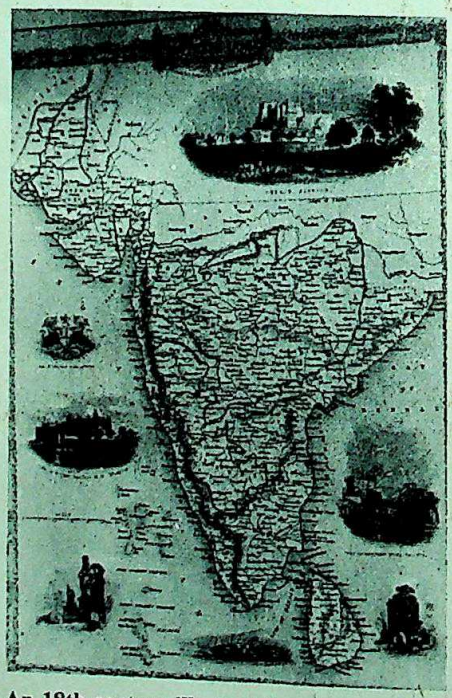
For centuries the Dutch, who travelled extensively in search of trade and conquest, carried with them skilled artists who drew fanciful drawings of India which were finally engraved and printed. The source of these engravings and drawings were extensively derived from travellers' tales, mostly sailors, who told of their experiences of the mystic Orient to an enthralled audience back home. Tales usually consisted of minute details of the places, the customs and exotic people that these intrepid travellers encountered on their journeys. However, early engravings and maps give indications that the artists concentrated mainly around the coastal areas. It was only after the advent of the East India Company and the British that engravings of scenes of the interiors came to surface and flowed in a prolific stream till the mid-19th century.

Keen Interest: The exhibition consisted of maps from a collection of Susan Gole, who has been living in India since 1957, and has been collecting maps from all over the world with a keen interest in India since 1976. Gole has also published a book titled *Early Maps of India* as well as a facsimile and is in the process of preparing another book on the same subject. The maps on display and sale, ranging from a price tag of Rs 300 to Rs 2,800, were all prepared in Europe. The very early ones appear incorrect in their shapes and parameters, "but," as Gole explained, "it is a miracle that travellers drew detailed maps just by approaching a coastal area or being on land. I would never, for instance, be able to draw a map of Delhi, even if I travelled all over."



An 1832 view of Delhi's Chandni Chowk: rare glimpse

Gole's maps are a treasure of historical times. They tell more about India than any textbook could and provide a pictorial detail of a fascinating land. For instance, a map by William Baffin drawn from an account of Sir Thomas Roe's visit to Jehangir's court in 1619, shows trees between Lahore and Agra cow's head at Hardwar, depi source of the Ganges. There are maps which show various divi battlefield lines covering a cen India, in a geo-political transiti first large-scale map of south blished in Paris in 1753, the batt tween the French and the Briti strated. The map became very that time mainly because of its Most of the maps on display printed, finely lettered and do minute drawings of locations an maps a whole city or village scen porated.



An 18th century illustrated map of southern India: historical canvas

Meenakshi Devi, who exhi impressive collection of early and prints has been amassing traordinary views of India for a

Most of the prints were do tists commissioned by English houses or by artists who took rial from travelling seafarers. T tions are accurate and detailed, a view of India, without its s and congested areas.

The drawings of these sc carried by the artist and then e stone or metal and then prints out of them, for use as illus books on travel or geography. during that period. Hundreds a me thousands of prints were but not many have withstood th of time. The few that remain preserved down the ages with care and precaution serving as mentary of the India that was. —A

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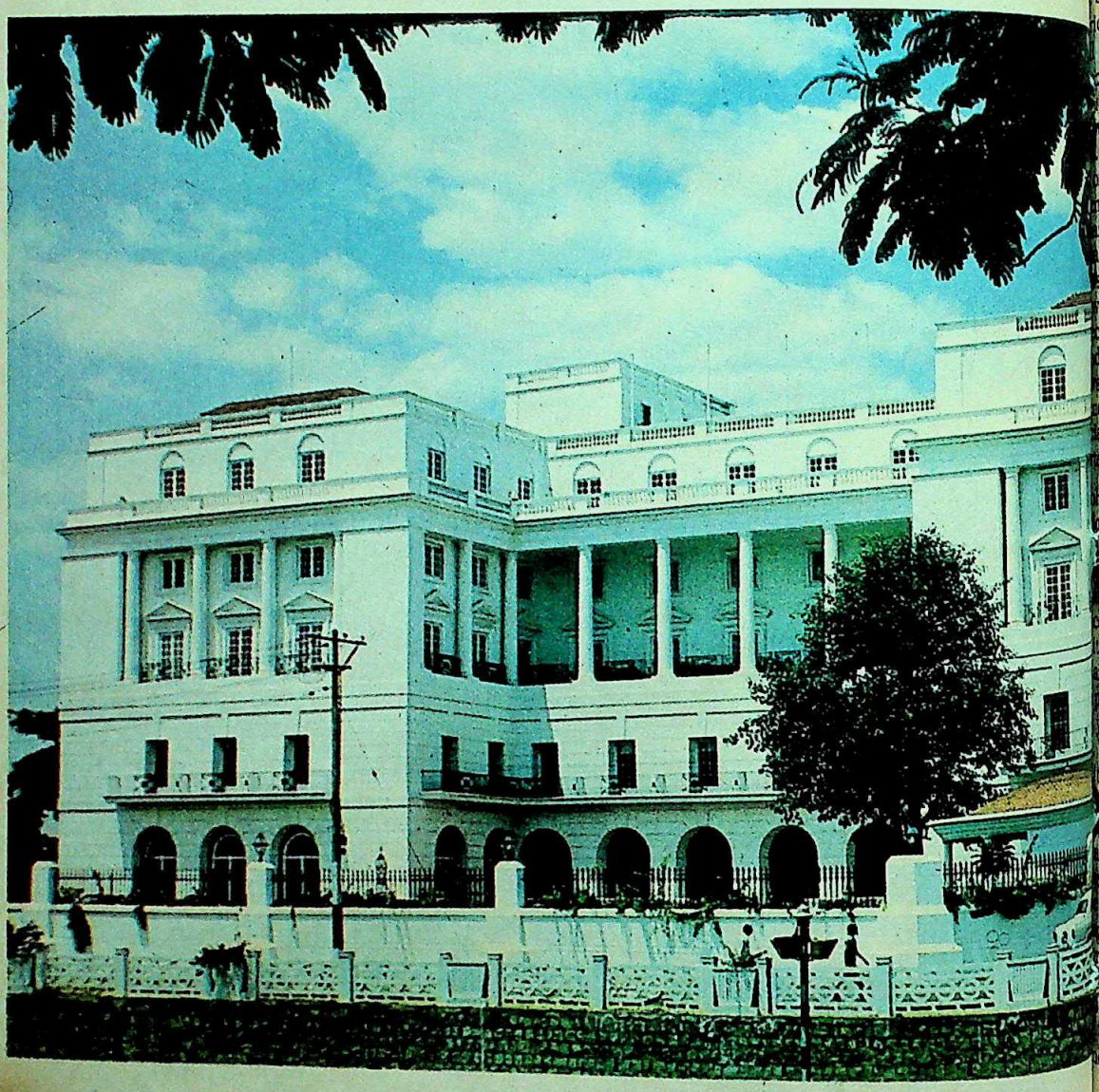

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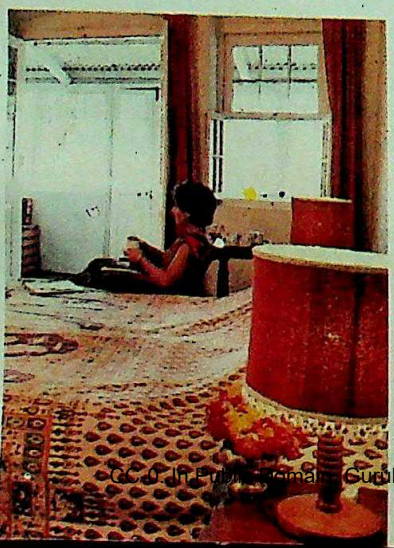

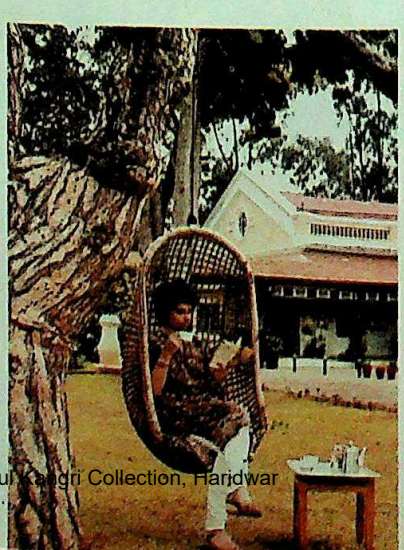

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he Master's Voice

LIOT AND MODERN HINDI
RY
M. KULSHRESHTHA

Rs 175; Pages: 231

"THESE fragments I have shored against my ruins." The man who wrote that nearly 60 years ago could not have foreseen that his "fragments" would pervade modern poetry so insistently. For the greater part of this century, Thomas Eliot, "with his features of clerical as had the kind of influence on d writers that few can boast of. the period immediately following War I, right down to the computer Eliot's poetry and criticism have d other rhymers all over the world. mes a study of Prufrock's effect on Hindi poets—an assessment of Harivanshrai Bachchan and r Bharati have adapted the ac- images of *The Waste Land* and *dnesday* to Bharat.

lkshreshtha has done a very good he begins with a short overview of work, moves on to another concise s on Hindi poetry, and then to the of four major Hindi poets: an, Bharati, S.H. Vatsyayan ya') and Girija Kumar Mathur. course, that clerical figure hover- e background as a durable point rence. Kulshreshtha ends with a onclusion where he asserts that influence on the development of trends in Hindi poetry is more of ution in art than an imitation."

ate Knowledge: In retrospect, ho- Kulshreshtha didn't really have to very hard. Bachchan, Bharati, and Mathur are not from the lass of starving poets deep in the eartland of India, they are urban onists and their perception of the m and emptiness of city life and g lack of faith could not fail to en stamped by the perceptions of a o is perhaps the most sensitive ch- of urban nothingness.

o, the four poets were on intimate ith Eliot—Bachchan was a lecturer glish at Allahabad University, was doing his M.A. in English literature before he threw it up to join the freedom movement, Bharati has published translations of Eliot's poems, Mathur obtained a Master's in English literature. Other Hindi poets that the author considers—Prabhakar Machwe, Ram Bilas Sharma, Raghuvir Sahay and Kunwar Narayan—were all students of English literature and were probably steeped in Eliot.

It is not very surprising then that Eliot's immortal images recur with almost monotonous regularity in the Hindi poetry *oeuvre*. Bachchan, for instance, laments that "Today truth has become so unbearable/One would rather have molten lead poured in one's ears than hear the truth", which echoes in slightly laboured fashion Eliot's "Human-kind cannot bear very much-reality" from the first of the four quartets.

Parallels: 'Agyeya' talks of his loneliness that is "submerged in the community,/Every member of which has an assigned duty", following Eliot's concept expressed in the litanies of *The Rock*: "There is no life that is not in community." Mathur comes even closer to his literary mentor, when he expounds on the "fresh, light smoke mixed with the flavour of onions and turmeric"; an Eliot habitué would immediately think of "The winter evening settles down,/With smell of steaks in passageways." Bharati's "semi-conscious world/Spreading its wings of fog" is a direct descendant of Prufrock's "yellow fog."

For all their debt to Eliot, the Hindi poets often move beyond his precise evocation of the mood behind the mask to an idiom that is entirely their own. Consider Mathur's *Staggering, Faltering Night*: "It is the last shadowy hour of the staggering night./In the sky, like light smoke, there are distant golden stars/that keep a watch with heavy eyes,/That slow breeze blows laden with sleepiness./The city drenched in rain/Is still dreaming of the dawn;/In the long, dim avenues that are haunted/By the tired sadness of the light burning the whole night..."

It is clear that the Hindi poets' trips to the inexhaustible well of Eliot's poetry is not literary slavery. By adopting and adapting the images of the English world's most penetrating observer of the human condition, Bachchan and his fellow poets have demonstrated the universality of verse. Kulshreshtha's book is a tribute to that achievement.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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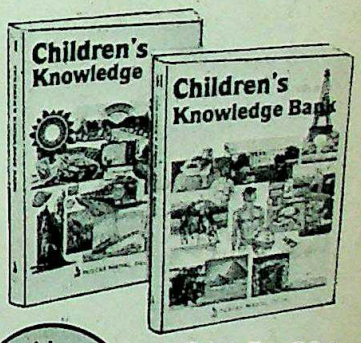

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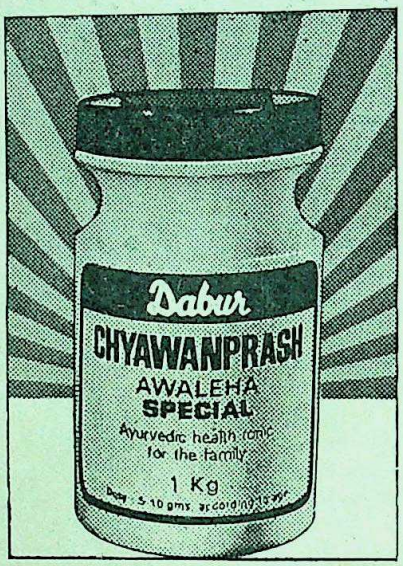

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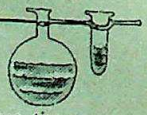

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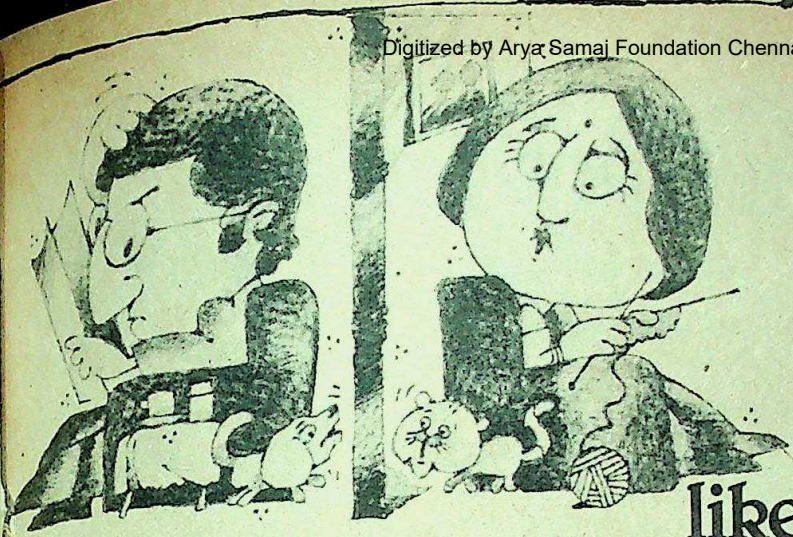

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CRICKET

Lahore's Lessons

THE CURRENT India-Pakistan Test series has, as usual, aroused great interest in both countries. INDIA TODAY *commissioned former Indian captain* BISHEN SINGH BEDI *to report on play on—and off—the field. Bedi's comments on the India-England series earlier last summer (*INDIA TODAY, *July 31, 1982) brought in an enthusiastic response from readers, who appeared to have liked the idea of one of India's most enduring players talking about his one-time colleagues spiced with news from the dressing-room.*

This time, Bedi will be doing four reports on the six-Test series. The first of these reports is on the first Test in Lahore which ended in a draw.

AFTER the magnificent spectacle of the IX Asian Games, the nation's attention turned towards the Indo-Pak cricket series. Fortunately, for those who cared, the void left by the completion of the Asian Games —which had almost become a way of life —was not felt as much.

A contest with Pakistan, be it political, social, cultural or sporting is always accepted as the ultimate challenge in both countries, by the public as well as the press. I was at the National Stadium when Pakistan destroyed India 7–1 to become kings of Asian hockey. When the score was 3–1 in favour of Pakistan, a majority of the Indian supporters started deserting the stadium. One of them spotted me and remarked with disgusted sarcasm: "I hope the cricketers will do better than the hockey players." I was so furious, I wanted to strangle that wag. Is it the end of the world if India loses to Pakistan in hockey or cricket? I am sure many Pakistanis would ask a similar question.

Background: Well, the fact remains that when it comes to cricket or hockey between the two countries, it no longer remains a sport to be enjoyed. I discovered this ugly aspect, much to my personal sorrow, in 1978 when we toured Pakistan after a gap of more than two decades. We lost to a decidedly better team, but the Indian public could not accept it. On the other hand, General Zia got so carried away that he declared a national holiday and promptly rang me up to elatedly convey his decision.

I feel that this background is essential to emphasise the relative importance of the present series. For one thing, India avenged the 1978 debacle with a comfortable 2–0 victory when the Pakis visited India in 1979–80. That time, too, the Pakistanis were a stronger combination, but we played better. I don't think Majid Khan would agree with that. He was pretty vocal about the standard of Indian umpiring. Not only that, he made no attempt to hide his anti-Indian feelings,

Javed Miandad gets a 'life' off sloppy fielding

Zaheer Abbas watches Madan Lal (right) drop him off Kapil Dev: costly lapses

which was a shame really, cons
his educational qualifications
stint at Cambridge. Let's hope
tour of Pakistan is devoid of a
pleasant.

Enjoyable Stay: I flew into
December 9 in the august co
party of Indian cricket boa
headed by the eminent N.K
whose qualification as Union
state for information and b
added stature to the group. It
sant surprise for me to be part
set-up. I'd like to think we all
stay in Lahore. There were
evenings of fun and laughter,
nights and endless discussions
Pak relations.

If your hosts range from
Ali (as legendary as our

to Nur Jeha
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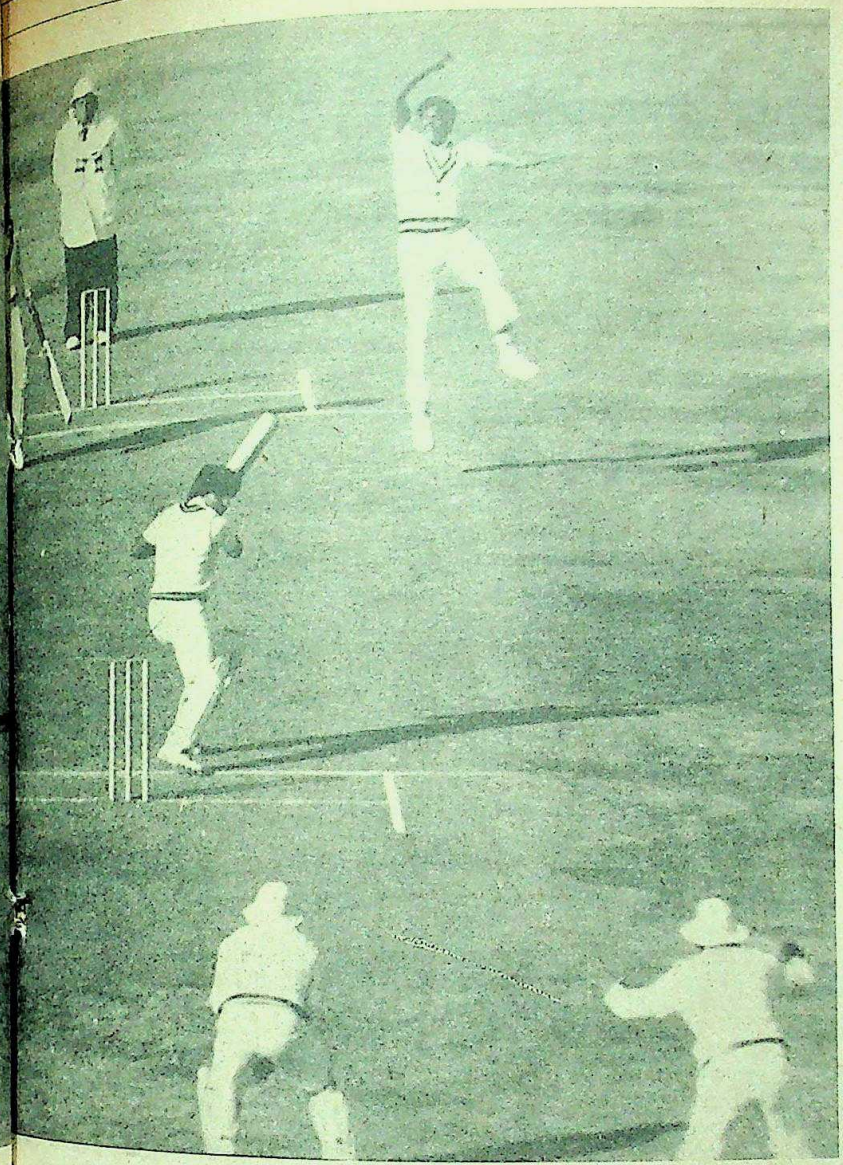

to Nur Jehan to Mallika Pukhraj Ahmed Faiz, there shouldn't be omplaints. But I am not too sure me of the Indian cricketers felt party arranged by Zaheer Abbas urbed by a military raid. Fortuna- everybody concerned, sanity was ored.

Or the weather, Lahore was pretty bit too uncomfortable perhaps e spectators' point of view. But the wasn't the sole reason for the attendance in an Indo-Pak Test

BCCP (Board of Control for in Pakistan) took the unpreceden- ision to give a private contractor of the gates for the entire series. A le deal that for the Pakistan something to the tune of Rs 1.60 but what a way of running away e responsibility of cricket organisa-

Bad Deal: It would be naive to expect that the contractor didn't mean business. The strategy was well-planned, but not well-executed. The whole thing misfired for want of proper economic guidance, the ticket denominations (Rs 1,500 to Rs 350) were not within the means of an average cricket follower, with the result that crowd involvement, which is ever so essential for Test match atmosphere, was totally lacking.

Another widely rumoured theory is that the Government was apprehensive of political demonstrations. It would be relevant to recall that the Gaddafi Stadium got its name during the Bhutto regime. Well, if this story has any truth in it, the local authorities did extremely well to keep potential trouble-makers away. It is quite another matter that the game suffered. Omar Qureshi, the renowned Pakistani commentator, suggested "Rent-a-crowd" to the BCCP.

NOW LET'S come down to the game itself. I was quite astonished to find that the traditional courtesy of using the centre wicket for a Test match was done away with. Of course, the host country is well within reason to prepare a wicket to suit the home team, for which a well-grassed track on the extreme edge of the square was prepared. Was it a wonder then that the Pakistanis opted for an all pace attack—four of them, in fact, shades of the West Indian influence?

Long before the toss took place, both teams had worked out a strategy to field first. So that when Gavaskar won the toss and invited the Pakis to bat first, his only regret might have been that he had decided to play two spinners. Cricket logic suggested that if we had made up our mind to field another seamer, Balwinder Sandhu would have been a good choice. And the pity is that Sandhu may not strike such ideal conditions for seam bowling on the rest of the tour. I am quite positive that Sandhu would have made better use of the wicket for the simple reason that he bowls a fuller length.

Big Innings: Both Kapil Dev and Madan Lal expected much out of the wicket rather than their own ability to keep the ball up to the batsman. Perhaps the sheer excitement of bowling on a greentop was working against their intentions, plus the unpardonable string of dropped catches one after the other, literally—and all behind the stumps and in the slips region. Mohsin was let off very early. Javed Miandad didn't capitalise on the two lives, which was some relief. But Zaheer Abbas made the best of a life in the 70s to pile up a magnificent double hundred, and in the process completed a century of first-class centuries, which to my mind was a great achievement. Zaheer is the first Asian to do so. Modestly, 'Z' thanked 'Allah' for "making a dream come true".

Not many in world cricket can compete with Zaheer's appetite for runs. He is a great player and the Pakistanis expected me to join them in acknowledging Zaheer as one of the best in the world, which I did readily. But when I was asked to agree that Zaheer was the greatest in Asia, I said that was debatable.

Of the other Pakistani batsmen, I was very impressed with Mohsin Khan's development into a world-class player. I remember he got a hundred off us in '78 at Hyderabad. Then he was a "goer" for the ball. He is more organised in his defence now, without looking any less attractive. Like Zaheer, I suspect Mohsin too is going to relish the Indian bowling.

Lethargic Fielding: Which brings me to the limitations of the Indian attack. It

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is very important that some front-line batsmen should realise this sad aspect. I am sure they can complement the attack with a slightly more intense involvement on the field. And in order to do that, practice sessions ought to be taken more assiduously. Nearly all the senior bowlers were lamenting that the Indian team's fielding was pretty lethargic.

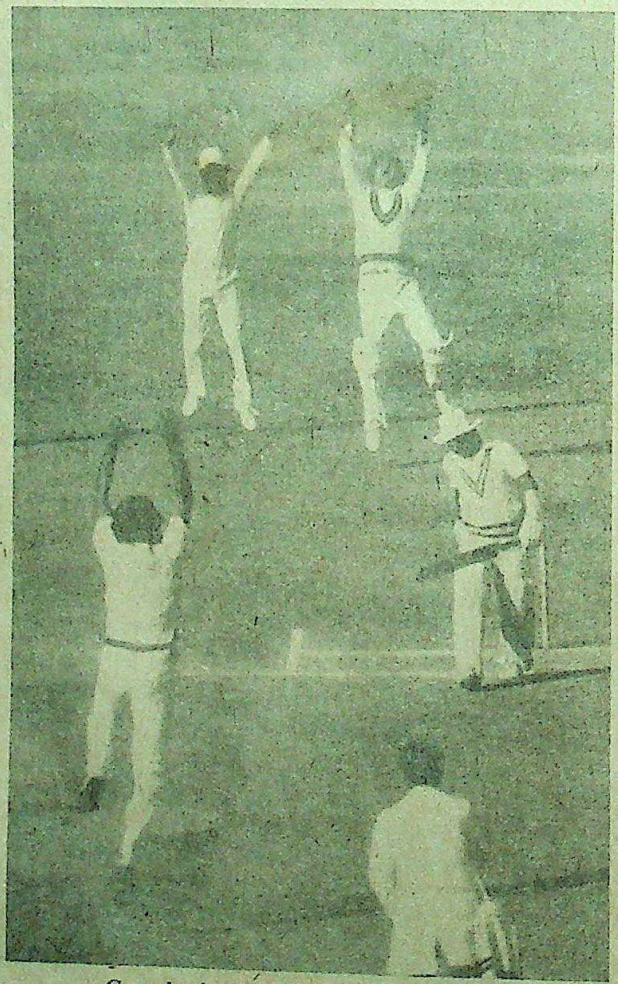
Pakistan took two full days to pile up 485, not a brisk rate of scoring, but very effective all the same. Mohsin and Zaheer cornered all the glory. So much so that Dilip Doshi's outstanding feat of five wickets was nearly put in the shade. I rate Dilip's effort exceptional because there wasn't much for him in the wicket. His length and direction were superb, and his application was that of a thoroughbred professional.

Not for the first time, India were chasing a mammoth score, firstly to avoid the follow-on and then to establish some kind of authority over the fearsome Imran Khan and the not so fearsome Sarfraz Nawaz, Tahir Naqqash and Jalaluddin. Both Gavaskar and Arun Lal went about their task of laying a sound foundation in a methodical manner. In their eagerness to frighten the batsmen out, the Pakistani bowlers sacrificed the virtues of line and length, and the visitors prospered. Lal is showing a lot of keenness to learn, something he can do abundantly watching his captain bat at the other end.

Determined Play: Sunil grafted as only he can, although there were a few anxious moments against Imran, by far the best Pakistani bowler. The Pakistani captain stirred a bit of panic in the Indian dressing-room when, on the fourth morning, he sent back Lal, Vengsarkar and Vishwanath in quick succession. But Mohinder Amarnath and Gavaskar steadied the situation with solid, grim determination. One was staging a come-back to Test cricket after three years and the other had the herculean responsibility of a captain leading by personal example. Both of them had more than their share of bouncers, but they never flinched.

I can understand Imran behaving and looking fearsome. But I was surprised to see Tahir and Jalaluddin overdoing the bouncer. In terms of aviation, it was like a Dakota trying to be an *F-16* which, incidentally, is the latest craze in Pakistan. Once Sandeep Patil came on the scene, both Tahir and Jalaluddin were put in their place, well and truly. In a swift partnership with Mohinder Amarnath, Sandeep brushed away the follow-on threat and went on to emphasise the innocuousness of the Pakistan bowling. Except for Imran, I can't imagine any of the other three medium pacers running through the Indian batting line-up. An injury kept Abdul Qadir out of the first Test, but surely Iqbal Qasim or Tauseef Ahmed were good enough to break the monotony of medium pacers.

Staying On: Sarfraz Nawaz, that peculiar character of Pakistan cricket, was staging a come-back to Test cricket and simultaneously threatening to retire. But the media wouldn't entertain his gimmicks. He told me: "If I don't get any wickets, I leave gracefully, but if, *inshaallah*, I get a few, then the selectors have no choice." Cheeky soul, big Sarf! As it turned out, Sarf did bowl well, as he has done on so many occasions in the past. I have a faint suspicion that Sarfraz will continue on a match-to-match basis.



Gavaskar's wicket falls: dogged innings

Mohinder Amarnath go[illegible] Test hundred on the fifth day, [illegible] served effort and unbeaten to[illegible] Test itself was always heading [illegible] considering the thin bowling [illegible] both the teams. I am not too [illegible] captain is going to take the ini[illegible] for a win. The mere thought of [illegible] pened to a fellow called Bish[illegible] another called Asif Iqbal mus[illegible] back of the mind of both Ga[illegible] Imran.

The latter is relatively n[illegible] captaincy but he has already [illegible] positive impact on Pakistan crick[illegible] ver, I must confess that Imran [illegible] opportunities in the Lahore Te[illegible] off any of his tactical skills. And [illegible] publicised personal combat be[illegible] and Kapil Dev is yet to warm u[illegible]

Master Batsmen: On a pers[illegible] I was very pleased for both Z[illegible] Gavaskar, as they continue to [illegible] batting destinies of their respec[illegible] tries. They were both my colleag[illegible] rest of the world tour to A[illegible] 1971–72. They had both hit the [illegible] nal scene thunderously [illegible] themselves such accolad[illegible] Karachi Bradman" [illegible] Bombay Bradman".

Once in Adelaide, [illegible] Rohan Kanhai spotted [illegible] ting with Sir Donald. [illegible] ked: "Look, the Karach[illegible] and the Bombay Bradm[illegible] versing with the Orig[illegible] man." I have no doubt [illegible] Kanhai would acknowle[illegible] markable consistency of [illegible] run machines, one getti[illegible] ry of centuries and the [illegible] pleting 7,000 runs in Te[illegible] Well done, Zaheer and S[illegible]

There are not m[illegible] where high commissions [illegible] sies play such vital [illegible] Pakistan. In '78, the I[illegible] bassador, Shankar B[illegible] simply marvellous. Th[illegible] was pleased to note t[illegible] Ambassador, K.D. Sh[illegible] India's Consul-General i[illegible] G. Parthasarthy, went o[illegible] way to ensure the com[illegible] Indians in Lahore. T[illegible] team's manager F.P. C[illegible] himself an ambassador [illegible] will, if nothing else. In [illegible] Lahorite suggested that [illegible] tionship between the two [illegible] has improved so much [illegible] people reckon they mig[illegible] be playing friendly gam[illegible] the poor crowd respons[illegible]

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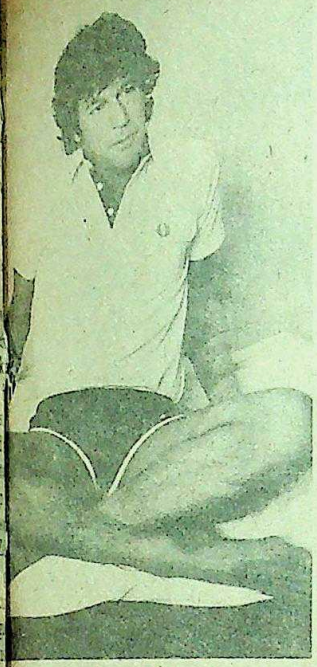

Imran Khan: bowling blitz

ACHI TEST

utclassed

I WRITE these lines the fate of the second Test is almost decided—heavily in favour of the team. The Indians have been sed in every department of the Losing the toss was not of any quence since we would have batted we won the toss. But we batted so dly in the first innings that to remain game was always going to be hard. mran has a healthy regard for batting strength. Naturally, he pprehensive about his gamble to first, but India never really recovered the time Gavaskar ran himself out shly. Imran is all praise for Abdul s remarkable bowling. "He gave us se vital breaks on that placid ," said the Pakistan captain. "I was used to see India fold up for 169."

Excellent Player: I would reserve my on Qadir's potential for the time for the simple reason that I rate n's own aggressive influence far tor. The Pakistani captain is ing really fast and accurate—a one-annihilation squad as far as the ns are concerned. Imran's positive ng appears to have the total ng of his team. According to some sources Imran is very headstrong. he and Intikhab Alam, team manager, make a formidable combination of example setters. "Inty is the best thing that has happened to Pakistani cricket in modern times," feels Imran. "He makes my job of captaincy so much easier."

At one stage in the second Test, the Indians had the Pakistanis reeling at 18 for three, for Omar Qureshi to comment that "Pakistan had engineered a do-it-yourself crisis." But that was only a false alarm. Zaheer Abbas made sure of that. He is plundering hundreds—his 186 is his fourth consecutive one on this tour—as if by habit. I recall that he scored heavily in '78 too, but somehow he appears a more complete batsman now with the same insatiable greed for runs.

Mudassar Nazar, too, chipped in with an authoritative hundred to add to the woes of the Indian bowlers. Imran is confident: "This Indian attack is incapable of bowling us out twice." How I wish Kapil and company would make Imran eat his words. But then, the Indian bowlers could certainly do with a little more support from the fielders. Fielding is one department where the home team are not only better they are outstanding.

Sudden Collapse: With a lead of 283 the avenues for an all-out Pakistani attack were limitless and Imran and Qadir were relentless with close-in fielders breathing on the necks of the Indian batsmen. Gavaskar and Vengsarkar put up brave resistance, but only just. They nearly saw a tired Imran out. Then, suddenly, Sunil's defence was pierced, and this rejuvenated the handsome Pathan. He produced a pearl of a delivery to make Vishwanath look like a novice in his 88th Test. Poor Mohinder was declared lbw once again, and left the wicket as perplexed as in the first innings.

Sandip, Kirmani and Kapil perished in quick succession. Admittedly Imran bowled a sensational spell, but some lack-lustre Indian batting encouraged the Pakistani captain. At the other end, even Qadir was made to look like a demon. There was no resolute application. Only Vengsarkar remains among the ruins.

Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar would prefer to forget the third day's play as "an ugly nightmare". But the little master is confident of coming back into the series *a la* Indian hockey, which he reckons is as good an example as one can cite. "We are down but not out," says the Indian manager, F.P. Gaekwad. But the Pakistani captain feels otherwise; says he: "The psychological advantage lies with us. With such a comprehensive defeat behind them it will be difficult for the Indians to come back into the series."

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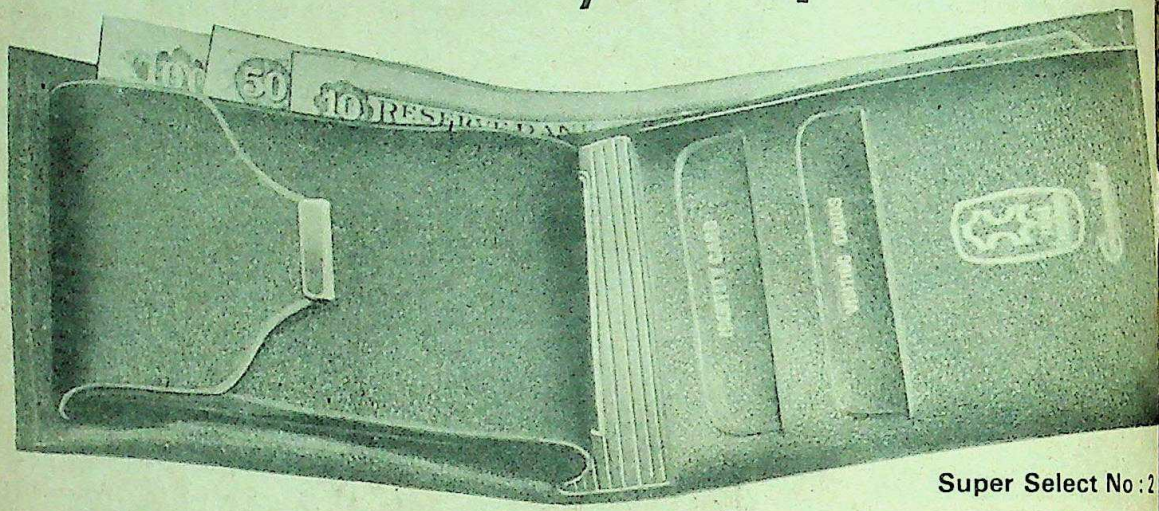

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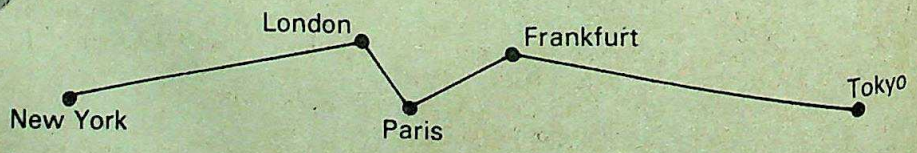

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aking Of A Master

R ONCE a Russian was not the r attraction at a chess tournament. fortnight, 16-year-old Dibyendu the thin, bespectacled chess prodigy est Bengal, proved at the 1982 a International Grandmasters ournament that he was no flash in n by defeating a highly-ranked randmaster, drawing with another ing an international master from

Halfway through the Barua lost some of his ling shine when he was by Indian international R. Ravi Sekhar, but with oints collected from six en- in the 11-match joust, l on his way to collecting uisite $6\frac{1}{2}$ points for the veted international master

na's performance was a crown to the Bhilwara It was the first time that big guns had congregated to battle each other—for 00 in prize money; three andmasters: Victor Ku- Joseph Dorfman, and aimanov; four interna- asters: William Hartston of and Sekhar, Ravi Kumar rameshwaran of India; l champion Pravin Thipsey, state champion Ashok der, V. Koshy, former l champion Nasir Ali and, se, Barua. Organised by the k Chess Club and the All ess Federation, the venue hushed auditorium at the of Soviet Culture in New

nours Even: Although the s were, according to obser- exerting themselves, the a with half the matches k players had notched up four each—two Russians and four —is enough evidence that the challenge was not insignificant. e best game of the tourney was acknowledged to be the Kuprei- arua encounter, which saw the lad tenaciously to a single pawn ad- with the Russian—the highest-rated 12—repeatedly trying to force a Kupreichik made no attempt to hide ings: "I will comment on Barua's ly after I have gained my revenge. But he did play better than me in this one game." Earlier, Barua had defeated Hartston with a powerful mating attack.

In fact, the Bhilwara joust seemed to have turned into a Barua exhibition. The three Russians expressed qualified admiration. Said Dorfman, who drew with Barua: "His strength is tactics and combinations. His positional play and end game are weak. He lost to Sekhar because Sekhar's positional play was much better. Barua is very strong on defence—in our drawn game, at critical points, he made the best possible moves and ensured that he could not lose." Dorfman concluded that Barua ought to have a very good coach, and really study chess, to improve his positional play.

BHAWAN SINGH

Barua ponders a move: intuitive brilliance

Qualified Approval: Taimanov, who didn't meet the Indian until later, commented that Barua understood the dynamics of the position very well. The Russian, who has been a grandmaster for the last 30 years, winning more than 20 international tournaments—he is also a brilliant pianist—said that Barua had a very good chance of becoming the first Indian grandmaster, but added that he lacked experience which could only be got if he played stronger players and studied chess literature. Taimanov summed up the Calcutta lad's talent by saying: "He has a flair for innovative combinations."

Barua himself displayed the kind of cool confidence so necessary for success. He, too, rates his encounter with Kupreichik as the best of the tournament saying that it was all a "matter of endurance". Barua, on his own account, is a curious mixture of almost instinctive brilliance. He started playing chess at the age of six, after a friend of his father's taught him the rules. He says he doesn't study his moves after a game and can see about five to six moves ahead—which Dorfman says is what the best players can do. Said Barua: "Sometimes I can see very clearly ahead. Against Hartston I carried through a 15-move combination. Sometimes, however, I can only see about two or three moves ahead."

Experience Needed: While Barua was almost certain to get his international master norm, the 40-odd chess-lovers who watched him every day were willing him to get a grandmaster norm by winning $8\frac{1}{2}$ points. However, the organisers were sceptical. Said N. Ghalib, tournament coordinator: "That is not going to be easy. His defeat at Sekhar's hands will slow him down." Nasir Ali also admits that Barua will have to wait some more; says he: "He is no doubt a very original player, but competition at the highest level is so tough that hard work is necessary before you can make it."

Whatever the final tally in the Bhilwara competition, it was clear that it was a watershed in Indian chess. Said Taimanov: "Twenty years ago India had not a single chess player of international standard. Now you have Sekhar, Thipsey and Barua." Kupreichik warns: "It takes dozens of years to get to our level—45 grandmasters and 35 international masters. You need a large chess structure—schools and legions of chess analysts—before you can achieve that." And though it may seem like a drop in the ocean, one Barua, nevertheless, is a good beginning.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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(From left) JRD, Mehta and Palkhivala: Parsi confluence

■ It was a gathering of Parsiland's brightest stars, a group of the tiny community's glitterati, exposed to the bright lights on the lawns of Bombay's Brabourne Stadium last fortnight. Converging from all corners of the world for a prestigious felicitation by the Parsi Panchayat in celebration of its 300th anniversary, more than 4,000 Parsis participated in the ceremony. Clustered together on the vast grounds of the stadium they all watched the notable among them receive a silver salver and scroll in recognition of their services to humanity and their community. Although the group onstage included such luminaries as industrialists **J.R.D. Tata, Soli Godrej** and **Naval Tata**, nuclear scientist **Dr Homi Sethna**, cancer specialist **Dr D.J. Jussawala**, lawyer **Nani Palkhivala** and social worker **Avabai Wadia**, the honours for the glittering evening nevertheless went to renowned conductor **Zubin Mehta**.

Mehta had specially flown in from New York for this event. On his first trip to Bombay since plans for the major motion picture, *A Quest For Zarathustra* to be shot in India were announced, the celebrity was becomingly modest about the praise showered on him. Said he: "I spent half my youth on these very lawns, playing cricket, but I never imagined I would one day stand and address my community like this. I don't deserve such a high honour."

■ When stars touch the firmament, hell breaks loose. But when American superstar **Robert Redford** was spotted touching ground at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport, last fortnight, his presence went largely unnoticed. Redford, looking tanned and weary after a long spell of trekking was in Nepal, location-hunting for his new film *Ascent* which will be shot mostly around Mt Everest. With none of the trappings that go with stars of his stature, Redford seemed relieved that he wasn't mobbed by tourists at the airport. Said the actor who generated mass hysteria in America in the late '60s

Redford: on the ascent

after he appeared in the all-time hit *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid*, and became an overnight sex symbol: "I feel pretty fresh about directing after having long been frustrated as an actor." And for good measure he added: "If one can inform while entertaining, that's just terrif."

■ She's tempestuous, given to tantrums and certainly knows where she's at. She's inspired many and moved many with her soothing devotional music. Her string of fans include Mrs Gandhi. And as if to prove that she reigns supreme, the lean and long-haired **Kishori Amonkar**, the prima donna of Hindustani classical music, sang to a rapt audience last fortnight, and while at it, raised a whopping Rs 9 lakh for the armed forces flag day, in Bombay. Amonkar, who in a rare moment of modesty once said: "I was very beautiful at one time," is the daughter of the legendary classical vocalist

Amonkar: a new image

Moghibai Kurdikar, and has in the past largely stayed out of the glittering limelight that goes with singing stars. But for the whole of 1982, Amonkar changed course and held an astonishing amount of public performances. And to top her renewed image, she cut a disc of her *bhajans*, after having stayed away from the recording studios for over a decade.

■ When the cat's away... and so it was on a bright and sunny winter morning at the capital's India International Trade Fair, when M was going down m on the birth anniver late Sanjay Ga December 14. W Gandhi was being audio-visual on Sa fair's Son of Indi **Dharamvir**, the ro Sabha MP and the **Arun Nehru** slipped noticed, for a c Minutes later the tw ned by the ever-faith assistant of the prim **R.K. Dhawan**. Whil and Nehru are not k on the best of terms, b this time the two dro defences and the trio make a hasty tri nearest *chaatwala*. *chaat* and tea were down they each hag whose treat it should

SIGN POS

■ **Awarded:** Mr Bedi, Delhi's firebr missioner of traff mendra, film s Mohammed Yunus, of the Trade Fair of India, the Award for 1982.

■ **Awarded:** The awards for 1982 Bhardwaj (creative Chaitanya Kalbag gative and human ri ries); Gurcharan S arts) and Madhup N forming arts). The outstanding social goes to the Sanjiv for Mental Health.

(From left) Dhawan, Nehru and Dharamvir: lappie

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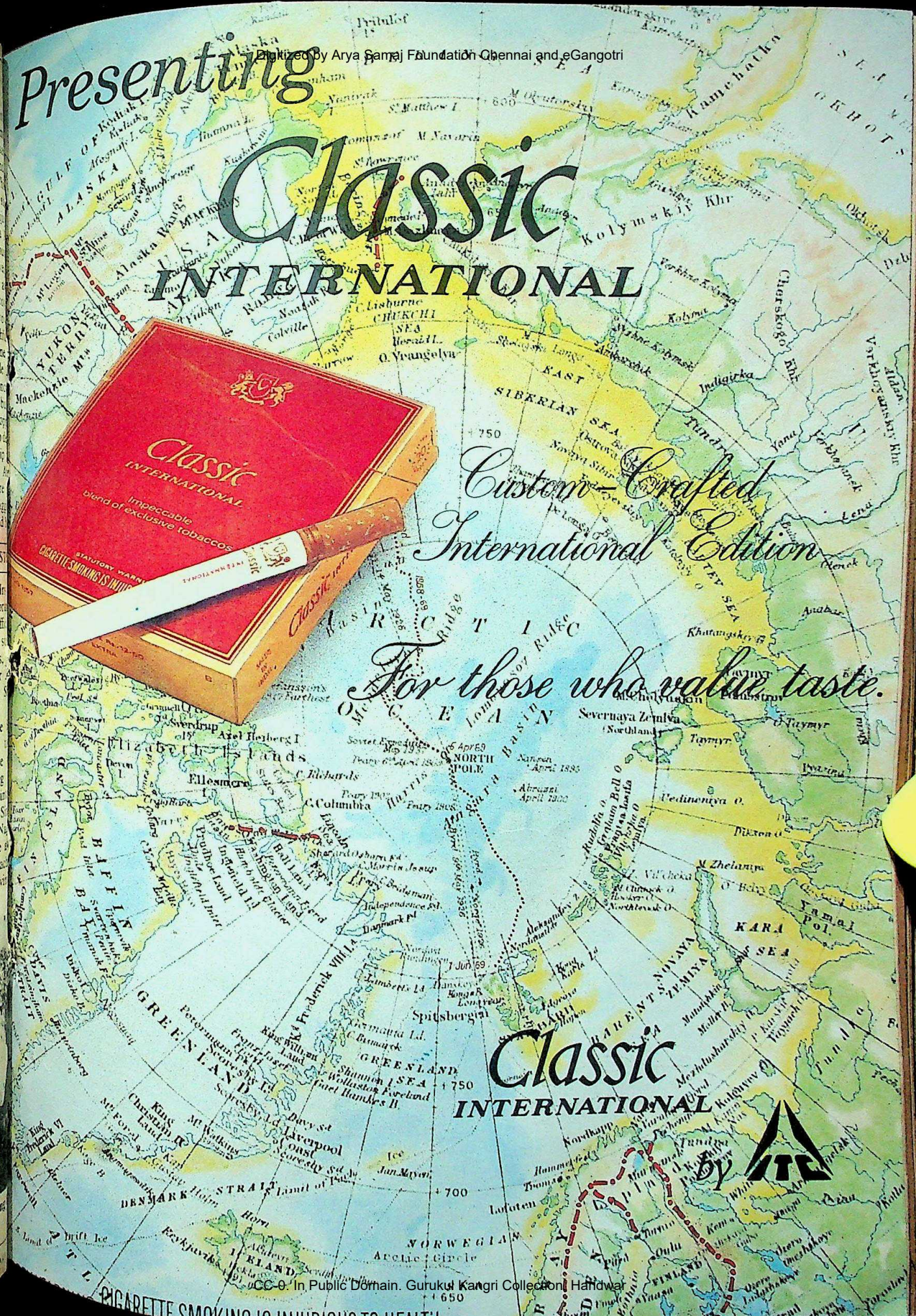

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THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

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"THE WORST thing that can happen to a pollster is to get a prediction dead right," said British psephologist David Butler who was in India as the results of the recent elections were declared and who has in this issue's cover story written his reaction to them. Butler's remark came during an in-house post-mortem on the election results and the forecast for Andhra Pradesh printed in the last issue of INDIA TODAY *(January 15, 1983) which was unable to gauge the full extent of the N.T. Rama Rao tornado which swept the state last fortnight. Butler's remarks underline the danger of treating a research tool as an infallible crystal ball. There is, of course, nothing infallible about a technique which seeks to forecast the behaviour of a vast, amorphous mass of humanity when it is being confronted with choices which arouse emotion and mass hysteria in addition to a subtle underlay of cold logic. Also, unfortunately the deadlines of the magazine dictated the fact that the opinion poll was conducted three weeks before polling date, making it difficult to capture the effect the full-scale campaigning may have had on the electorate.*

Psephology is a discipline which needs constant honing with experience and practice. But it is in keeping with the outlook of a magazine like INDIA TODAY *which believes that it is worth making the investments required and taking the necessary risk of going wrong in order to do a job in the best possible way. Sometimes, as in the 1980 Lok Sabha poll, such forecasts have turned out to be accurate. The 1983 Andhra Pradesh poll showed that things can also go wrong. That they did was, actually, of no surprise to some at* INDIA TODAY. *Anyone who covered the campaign came away with a strong gut feeling that the Congress(I) message wasn't going home, and that the Andhra electorate seemed determined to give the party a drubbing. But this had to be counterposed against the hard figures of an election forecast—and the uncertainties that go with any election. The coldest comfort, of course, for the pollsters and* INDIA TODAY *was that with notable exceptions, hardly anyone came near predicting the result.*

One exception was, in fact, in the office, and this cover story proves to be a continuation of the last one and the cover story on N.T. Rama Rao (Threatening The Congress Bastion, October 15, 1982). The latter story proved to be prophetic: Senior Editor S. VENKAT NARAYAN *wrote at the time: "Barring a miracle, in the next five months Andhra Pradesh appears set to become the second state in India after Tamil Nadu to vote a film star to power in the (next) assembly election....."*

THIS time round, Venkat Narayan travelled to Hyderabad on polling day and stayed on long enough to see Rama Rao being sworn in as the new chief minister. In neighbouring Karnataka, Correspondent RAJ CHENGAPPA, *who covered the story from his end, confessed to being taken completely by surprise like everybody else by the Karnataka results. In Delhi, Principal Correspondent* PRABHU CHAWLA, *who lost Rs 300 to various colleagues in bets on the Andhra Pradesh results, and Correspondent* SUMIT MITRA, *who played safe and took no bets, fanned out among the capital's political circles to gauge the broad impact of the results on the future of Mrs Gandhi and her party. Said Mitra: "This was certainly not the Congress(I)'s idea of a new year gift from the people."*

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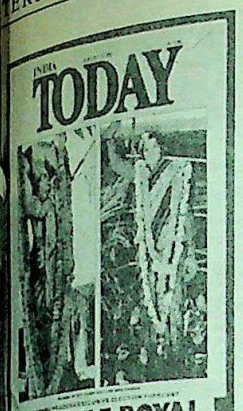


A BATTLE ROYAL

IAL CAMPAIGN

e cover story "A Battle Royal" y 15) gave extensive coverage of paigns being fought. But one thing out—that the Indian electorate can taken for granted.

R. Menon

the cover story you have stated that Sanjiva Reddy was Andhra s first Harijan chief minister and D. ya was the first chief minister. As a f fact, Neelam Sanjiva Reddy is not n and D. Sanjivayya was the first chief minister.

Mohafiz Hyder

reference was meant for D. a but was inadvertently made for N. Reddy. The error is regretted.

—Editor

G TIMES

sting Time Ahead" (December 31) Mrs Gandhi's style of function- h shows she is capable of staying ol despite adverse political, social, and moral conditions. But the verlooked the most important fac- the shortcomings in her political —the bad selection of candidates 1980 parliamentary elections. And n responsible for the wrong selec- Sanjay Gandhi. Consequently, orious persons were given tickets xpense of the more reliable loya- his is why Mrs Gandhi is being ious this time by appointing ob- Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

S.C. Mathur

th dissident activity reaching its uggest that the Congress(I) cha- ame to "Anybody's Congress".

Shirsanka Ghose

trend of 'mercantilism' in the Pradesh polls has been overlooked over story. What Dalal Street is to a businessman, Parliament Street has become for Indian politicians. It is the political stock exchange, where the politicians trade natural and intellectual resources for rights of governance.

Bhimadole *Venkatramana*

■ The outcome of the elections to various state assemblies is already obvious. Which other party can match the ruling party in corrupting the electorate, capturing booths and hiring hoodlums? In spite of this, if the Congress(I) fails to clinch the majority, it will still manage to grab power by buying the people's representatives. Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and more recently Nagaland are glaring examples. So why discuss elections at all?

Dombivili *R.R. Shanbhag*

■ It is really gratifying to see how engrossed Mrs Gandhi is in preparing for a self-reliant India. Under her leadership, our nation's international status has risen, and concepts such as equality, self-reliance and independence have become a reality.

Dharwad *S.S Salimath*

■ The cover picture of a pensive Mrs Gandhi was absolutely superb. And the caption "Testing Time Ahead" was very appropriate.

Madras *Padma Raghavan*

■ Mrs Gandhi's photograph was a real eye-catcher. It shows that even after the age of 60, she still looks handsome and imposing.

Shahjahanpur *Rajeev Chandra Seth*

■ It is really boring and somewhat sycophantic of your magazine to persist in featuring Mrs Gandhi on the cover. The article refers to her and her progeny as "India's first family" and the Bachchans as Indian "filmdom's first family", which is bunk. Regarding the latter, after *Junoon* and *36 Chowringhee Lane*, there is no doubt that the Kapoors hold that niche.

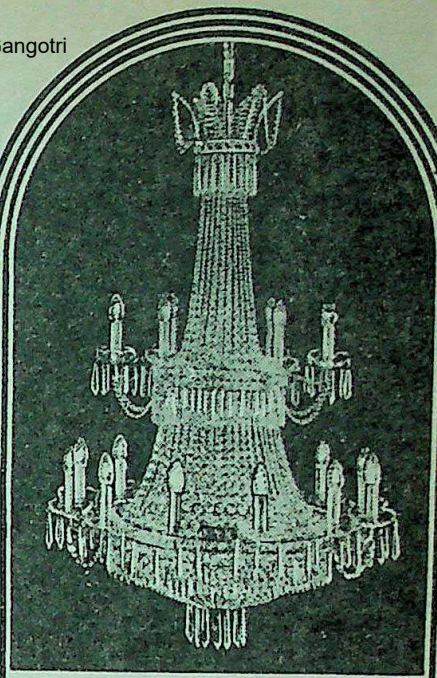
New Delhi *Arati Nagarwalla*

A SPORTING FIESTA

Your article on the Asiad '82, "The Triumphs And The Tragedies" (December 31) was excellent. The photographs by Raghu Rai and Bhawan Singh were breath-taking. However, the caption to one of the photographs said that the triple jumper Balasubramaniam won a silver. He won a bronze, not a silver.

Dehra Dun *Vikas Attri*

■ Your coverage of the Asiad was really grand. Not having had the opportunity to watch the hockey and football on the TV, it was refreshing to get a firsthand account



Film Star
Zeenat Aman's
opinion about
LITOLIER

It has been a pleasure to come here & have such a varied choice! All the Best.
Zeenat Aman
Bombay, India

(It has been a pleasure to come here & have such a varied choice! All the best!)

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through the issue. However, if one considers how well some of the smaller nations did at the Games, we should bow our heads in shame. Unless more attention is paid to training and discipline, our progress in future games will be static.

Bangalore *A. Brito*

■ Isn't it ironic that we invited a country like China which illegally occupies thousands of square miles of India, for the Games and we fall over each other to make them feel welcome, whereas we cold-shoulder Israel which has not lifted a finger against us.

Bangalore *K.V. Vijayasarathi*

■ The colourful pictorial fiesta dished out for the reader was a pleasant visual treat and the detailed narration a memorable feast for sports lovers. Congratulations for the fine team-work done by your scribes. The effort was worth its weight in gold.

Ahmedabad *Rekha B. Chimkod*

■ The total number of Indian medals for Asiad 1978 should have been 28 and not 27 as you have mentioned in you December 31 issue.

Kamptee *Ravi Sharma*

■ Isn't it a pity that even after an intensive voice training programme some of the Doordarshan commentators still managed to produce an extensive variety of sounds ranging from sniffles to disgusting grunts as they blew their noses and cleared their throats right next to the microphones? This was one thing that marred the otherwise perfect performances of the commentators. It probably takes five years of training to get rid of these habits.

Hyderabad *Hari S. Pai*

■ This is with reference to your article "Foul Play". I would like to point out that the sole responsibility for the ugly turn of events which followed the match between D.P.R. Korea and Kuwait rests

on the commanding officer of personnel, who rushed onto "rescue" the referee G. Vij tervention at a time when ne and emotions sky-rocketing, sportsmen indulge in what the costs taught to refrain from amateurish manner in which handled the show triggered action of violence from the e contingent. At the outset our very well do with some basic human psychology.

Delhi

CHECKING THE CHINES

"Chinese Checkers" (D was informative and lucid. N reaction to the subversive co the Chinese news agency, Xi the Arunachal Pradesh dance closing ceremony was the m thing to do. Since when have transformed their traditional d into the snow lion dance for th and expansionist aims?

Gangtok

■ The Chinese objection lion dance was really in bad went out of their way to cre pleasant situation. But then as as these from them have bec customary. The issue worth p is whether our government sho seriously as to cancel delegation's visit to the Kou function in China. Surely, if were really keen on "norm lations, they would have avoid troversy sparked off by such a

Bangalore *B. Jag*

■ The unjustifiable and statement by the Chinese Gov veals their true colours. India tinue with its initiatives for a lution to the border dispute. fence should always be ready rst. Too often have India's tentions and non-aggressive mistaken for a weakness.

Madras

■ Arunachal Pradesh mig puted area in the Chinese view not mean that they should st to attribute motives to us. goal seems to be to force th ple to an anti-China camp. ment should take a no-nons towards China. Peaceful co meaningful dialogue apparent in the Chinese dictionary.

Hyderabad

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■ The Chinese resentment over the Arunachal dance performance is ample proof of India's weak image abroad. Whether it is the Faraka Barrage or New Moore Island issue, India fumbles. The External Affairs Ministry should make greater efforts to glorify the nation's image abroad.
Kanhangad *Haresh Shenoy*

DEATH WISH

There is a strong case for euthanasia ("Wishing For Death", December 31), especially in a country like India where the state can do little to relieve misery and suffering. In any case, an individual should not be denied the right of opting out of a miserable existence. What was allowed in the case of Vinoba Bhave should apply to all.
Paramkudi *G. Parthasarthy*

■ Euthanasia has its advantages, if properly implemented. It would release one from utter misery, which can result when one is kept alive with the aid of machines which actually prolong death.
Bulsar *M. Raju Naidu*

ANOTHER SONRISE

The special report on Chandan Basu (December 31) was an excellent piece of investigative reporting. Kamalnath's statement that Chandan is a different breed from the Suresh Rams and Kanti Desais may be true but he certainly is no better than Sanjay Gandhi. Chandan has his own Maruti under the name and style of Eastern Biscuits Company Pvt Ltd pampered by no less than the Britannia, while concerns like the Lilly and Kolay declared lock-out. Like his counterpart, Sanjay, a drop-out from Doon School, Chandan too has the credit of demotion at class IV at the prestigious South Point School which led him to enter Amherst Street where he admittedly picked up 'the vices'. This is no worse a skeleton in the cupboard of Comrade Jyoti Basu than Mrs Gandhi. Bengal Marxists have their own Sanjay.
Orissa *Laxmikant Adhikary*

■ It was shocking to see that your magazine had devoted three precious pages by giving undue publicity to a chief minister's son. No doubt India has been dubbed as "the land of rising sons".
Calcutta *Soumitra Dey*

■ Being a chief minister's son, Chandan Basu has faced innumerable problems to establish his business, without exploiting his father's rank. His achievement should bring new prospects in the industry.
Bihar *Alok Kumar Jha*

■ In your article you mention that as late as 1977 Chandan was walking from shop to shop hawking exercise books. His father became chief minister exactly in that year. It is obviously not a case of nepotism.
Calcutta *Ahibhusan Chatterjee*

■ Your report claims that Chandan Basu's trucking unit supplies diesel oil to the Jamadoba iron ore mines of TISCO. An elementary knowledge of the mineral resources of India would have told you that there is no iron ore in Jamadoba. The area is rich in coal and some of TISCO's captive collieries are located in Jamadoba near Dhanbad.
Bombay *Ramji R. Abinashi*

The Jamadoba mines supply coal, not iron as was erroneously stated. —**Editor**

CORRUPTION UNLIMITED

It is disheartening that the prime minister took no action although a petition signed by 40 MP's had been sent to her last May. (NCCF: "Dubious Dealings", December 31). Mrs Gandhi is fast losing her charisma by blatantly encouraging corruption.
Orissa *Sanjaya Kumar Mishra*

■ The dubious dealings of the NCCF infiltrates from the top to the lowest employees. The number of NCCF guest-houses have become a paradise for the servants employed by them. There is just one job for them—merry-making. I should know because I happen to be one of the neighbours of an NCCF guest-house.
New Delhi *Ameena*

■ Although your magazine succeeded in proving the charges against NCCF's Tapeshwar Singh, the manner in which his band of devoted cronies lifted the copies of the issue in Patna vindicated the allegations.
Patna *Sanjay Jain*

■ When amassing wealth has become the motto of all our powerful political leaders, it is futile to single out Tapeshwar Singh and A. K. Mukherjee.
Bihar *Param Hans Singh*

THE REAL REASON

I would like to point out that Tamil Nadu's Anti-scurrility Act did not create such an uproar as the Bihar Press Bill ("Bill Of Fair" In the Air, December 31), in spite of their resemblance. The basic reason was that the then Tamil Nadu chief minister was not as corrupt as is Jagannath Mishra. Had Mishra's intentions been free from bias, the bill would have pa[illegible] an uproar.
Shahjahanpur *Rajeev C[illegible]*

AGELESS STARS

It appears that you are in [illegible] showing the age of a film sta[illegible] low the actual one. In you[illegible] December 31, the age of Dim[illegible] is 23. Her elder daughter is [illegible] This means that she delivered [illegible] 15! When she married and wh[illegible] ceived is a matter of arithm[illegible] you are poor in it or you [illegible] suppress it to gain the star's fa[illegible] have also stated Dev Anand's a[illegible] *Dada* review) as 60. Three years [illegible] he announced his intention of [illegible] film, he himself stated that he w[illegible] Probably the clock has stopped [illegible] A couple of months ago, whi[illegible] his marriage, you mentioned [illegible] Mithun Chakraborty as 26 [illegible] himself admitted being 33 in a [illegible] gazine. The fact is that even the[illegible] himself younger by four years.
New Delhi [illegible]

COMPREHENSIVE COVE[illegible]

It was a pleasure reading [illegible] story on the Asiad (December [illegible] *Washington Post* only negati[illegible] like the Akali problem were covere[illegible] Games. But your magazine gave [illegible] and detailed coverage—it was [illegible] the Games live. I wish to congratul[illegible] you, but also the organisers of the G[illegible] job well done.
Washington D.C.

■ The issue provided the mo[illegible] hensive and yet the most co[illegible] verage of the Asiad. Your co[illegible] contained information and re[illegible] stories of the financial and org[illegible] aspects of the Games, expert p[illegible] unbiased and in-depth analyses—[illegible] the chauvinistic, and often sketch[illegible] ed out by other magazines.
Kerala *Prak[illegible]*

■ The coverage of the Asiad [illegible] lent. I could get a clear pic[illegible] event just by reading that issue.
Libya

HIGHWAY INJUSTICE

With reference to your [illegible] Postures" (December 15), it is [illegible] learn that the Government h[illegible] to heavy deployment of forces [illegible] necessary search of vehicle[illegible] National Highway—a clear [illegible] the fundamental rights of the c[illegible]
Shillong *Dilip A[illegible]*

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IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

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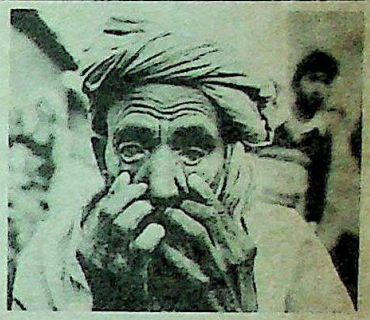
Eye-catchers

PHOTOGRAPH BY RAGHU RAI

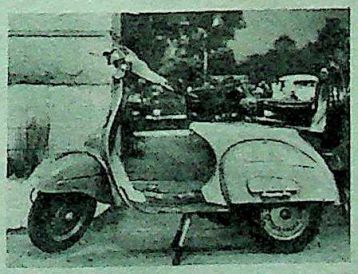
COVER STORY: Mrs Gandhi's stunning defeat, last fortnight, at the hands of Telugu Desam leader, actor-politician N.T. Rama Rao in Andhra Pradesh and in Karnataka by the Janata-Ranga has shaken the Congress(I) to its foundations. The results of these elections are bound to have far-reaching consequences for Mrs Gandhi's leadership as well as the crumbling Congress(I). An in-depth analysis of the post-election scene and its effect on the Congress(I). **Page 18**

SPECIAL REPORT: Alarmed health officials in Rajasthan's Alwar district last fortnight, turned up with horrifying details of 28 villagers, who have been blinded in various villages in the district by quack doctors. In most cases, it has been found that the person responsible for the ruthless action has been 45-year-old Amilal Yadav, who has been operating on unwary patients in villages in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan. An investigative report. **Page 66**



INTERVIEW OF THE FORTNIGHT: Khushwant Singh, the ebullient editor of *The Hindustan Times*, is stepping down from the editorship of the paper at the end of January. The bespectacled Singh, a household name, has been the topic of much debate for his somewhat inconsistent political leanings. In a frank interview Singh talks about his reasons for leaving, and his future plans. **Page 84**

INVESTIGATION: Meant to assist the weaker and destitute sections of society and set up by the former chief minister of Maharashtra A.R. Antulay, the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Anudan Yojana and the Sanjay Gandhi Swavalamban Yojana, a monthly pension scheme for destitutes and a loans programme respectively, launched two years ago, have become flourishing rackets for the ruling party nominees. An in-depth report. **Page 100**



BUSINESS: The two-wheeler industry in India is zooming ahead as production has doubled in the last three years. By the end of the '80s annual production is expected to touch 2 million: a 600 per cent increase over the decade. Bajaj Auto, one of the leading manufacturers which has a waiting list of 1.4 million is expanding its capacity by setting up new plants, closely followed by other leading manufacturers. **Page 114**

SPECIAL FEATURE: On January 18 the strike by 2.5 lakh textile workers in Bombay completes a year; its longevity, and the determination of the workers to stay away from work, have confounded all predictions about its settlement. A report on how the average textile worker, both in Bombay and in the villages he has returned to, is coping with the strike and its debilitating effects. **Page 138**

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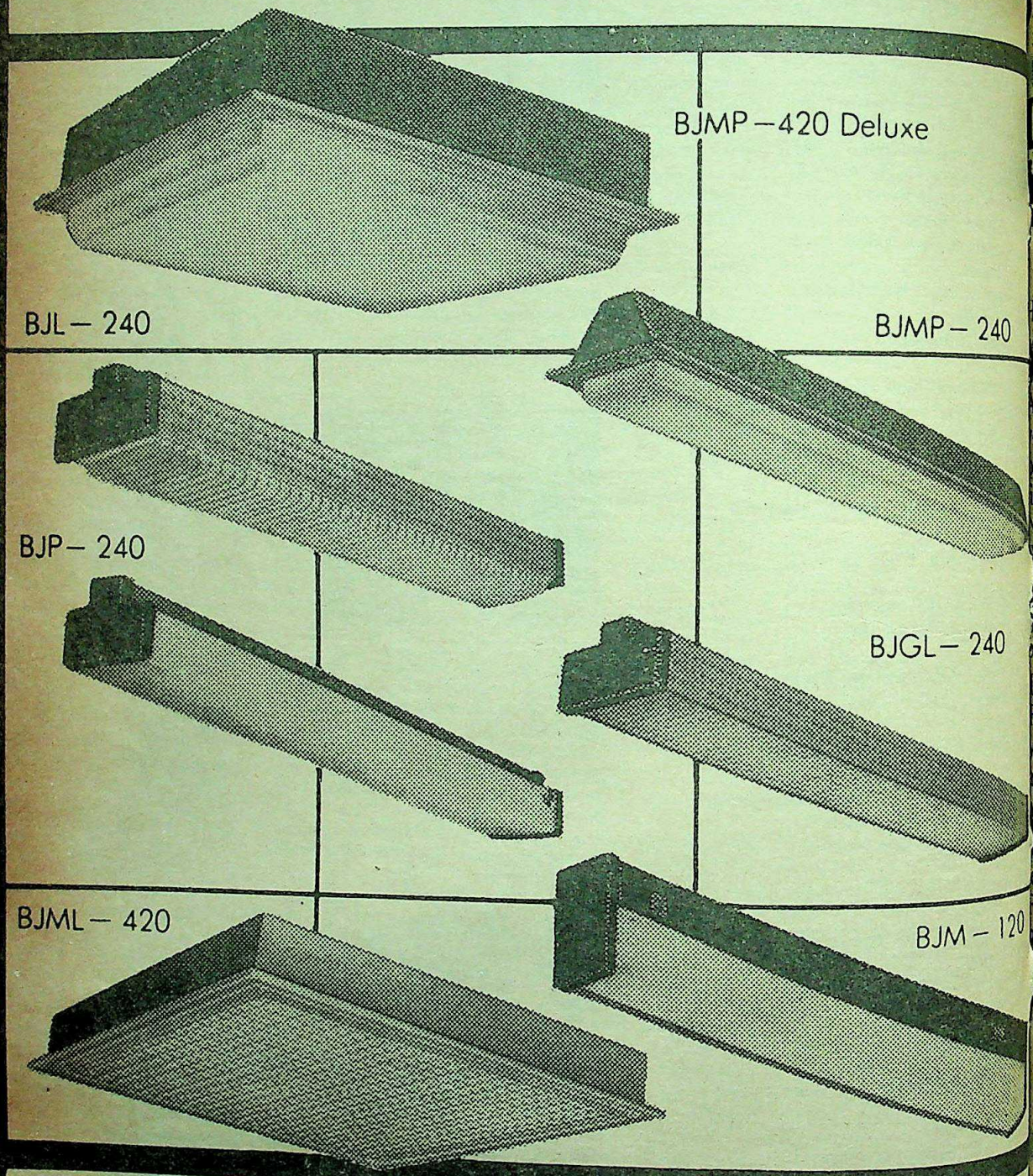

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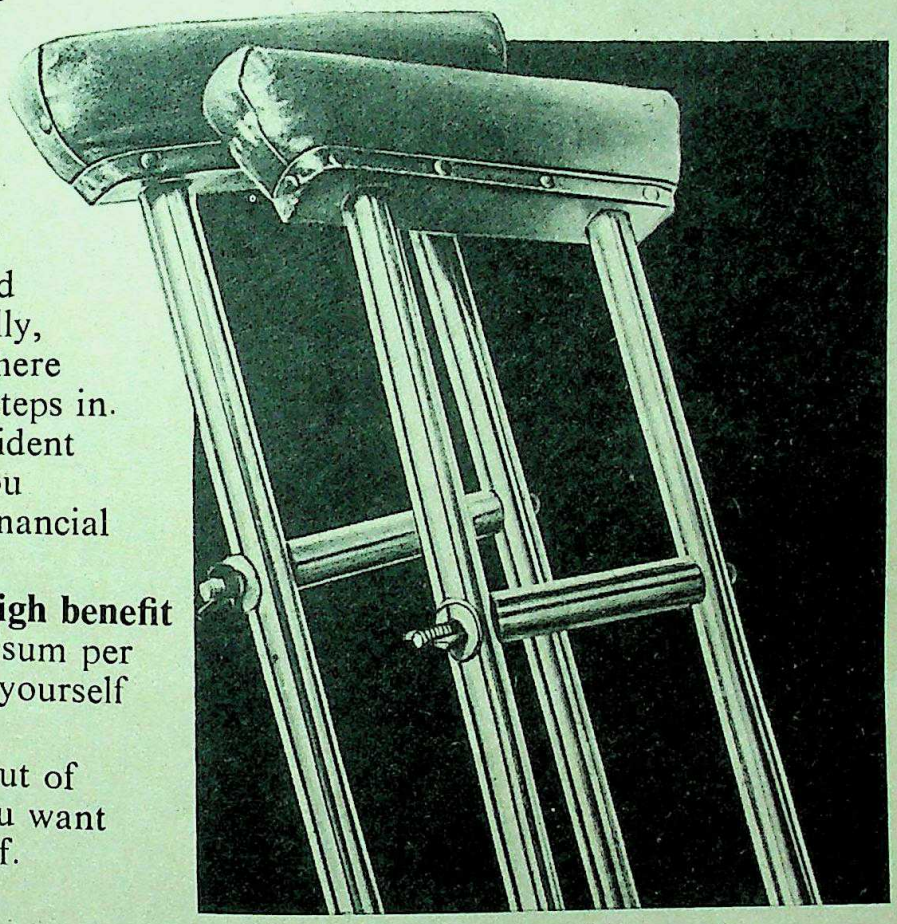

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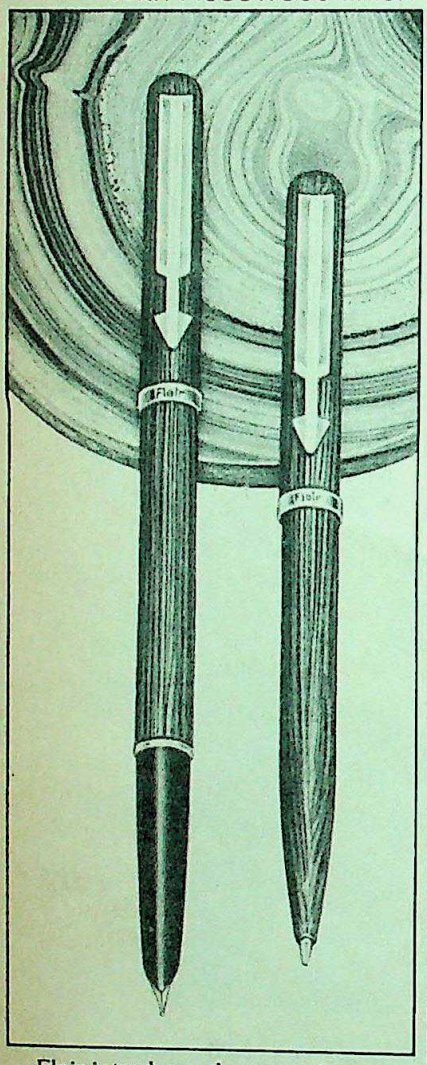

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NUCLEUS/WPC/24

» Far from the stories of the mendicant and his begging bowl, a state assets of Swami Dhirendra Brahmachari would seem to indicate that he is a one-man public sector.
—*J.S. Rao in Ou*

» Poll forecasts in the newspapers do not reflect public opinion. People who the newspapers do not vote and those who vote do not read the newspapers.
—*P. Venkatasubbaiah addressing a Congress (I) workers meeting in*

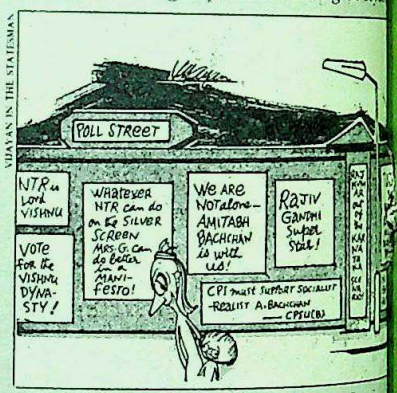
» Please don't kill me, I'm a football player.
—*The last words of 18-year-old Khaidem Imocha, before he was shot dea*
—*Manipur Rifles com*

» There is no continuous leadership anywhere and there is constant inter with the management...you have interference at every single step. The ma spend most of their time in Delhi answering parliament questions or getti mission.
—*J.R.D. Tata in* Delhi Re

» Mrs Gandhi's orders are being disobeyed, worse she is not even consi proper arbiter . . . the chief ministers do not think it necessary to meet the minister and if at all they do, it is to convey that they have already "disc what they wanted with Rajiv.
—*Kuldip Nayar in Co*

» The people of Andhra Pradesh stood by me whenever I was in trouble again I am in trouble. Please come and help me.
—*Mrs Gandhi addressing a public meeting in Hy*

» . . . no results of any election, howsoever sweeping, can be construed as the people's mandate to condone or compound the common law crimes allegedly committed by those who have been returned to power . . .
—*Justice V.D. Tulzapurkar in his dissenting judgement of the Mishra case*



» Finally about Rajiv Gandhi. It appears there are just two things that grow thin on him. His hair-line and the crowds that come to hear him.
—*T.V.R. Shenoy in* The

» Today I challenge any so-called powerful business houses in India. them that I will beat them in any field. You name it, I can do it.
—*Shipping magnate Ravi Tikoo in S*

» I have a friend called Henry Kissinger and he openly tells me how mu hated (India) . . . in the case of Indira (Gandhi) he didn't like her. I don't why. It was a personal thing.
—*Zubin Mehta in* The Sunday Ob

» I want them (the producers) to know that I am much more than Zeenie B the glamour girl who ran after and got exploited by men. I (want to) make as an actress.
—*Zeenat Aman in S*

» The new wave film makers are bullshit makers who sell cliches und name of art.
—*Shashi Kapoor in S*

» Ms (Shoba) Kilachand's tinsel bitchery has a soft plastic bottom. In it it is not lack of savagery that defeats her but a lack of intelligence.
—*Kersy Katrak in Gen*

» Ghani Khan (Choudhary) is a man in a tearing hurry, rushing pa signals, crashing through tunnels and belching steam, smoke and angry w he rattles along faster than the Frontier Mail.
—*Quark in the* Sunday

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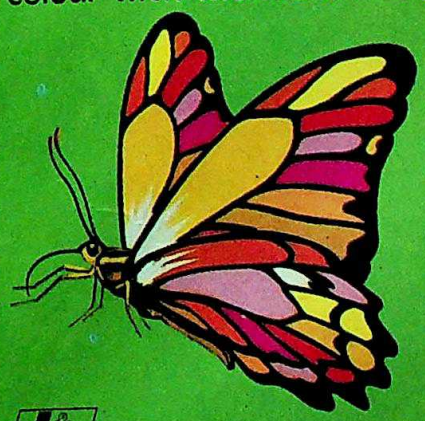
J&N enrich colour with the widest range of shades



Jenson & Nicholson
Plastic Emulsion, Enamels, Washable Distemper and Cement Paints.

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TO RECOGNISE THE
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HE UE OF F.U'S, KNOW ALL ABOUT JEANS.

Why are main seams saddle stitched? Why are there 5 belt loops? Why are denims called denims?

To answer all these, we go back to Christopher Columbus. When he sailed on his discovery of America, he fitted his ship with sails made of a sturdy cloth from Genoa, Italy. The material was 'Genoese'. It was soon corrupted to 'jeans'.

While neighbouring South of France gave to the world the 'denim', denim originated in 'serge de Nîmes'–cloth of Nîmes. Thus de Nîmes became denims.

That was just the beginning. Soon the cowboys in the Wild West created an era. They turned 'jeans' into an exceptionally durable, uniquely cut, uniquely styled garment.

The strength of the garment lay in the cloth. So tough was the denim, it might have been woven just for cowboys.

The styling was tough as well. Close-fitting, straight-legged, low-on-the-hips. No frills. Nothing fancy.

Every seam double stitched to take the long hours in the saddle.

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The pocket edges and stress points along the jeans were toughened by rivets.

They took the stress off the fabric.

5 belt loops not only supported a heavy holster; a cowboy also hung the tools of his trade from them.

The V-shaped seams at the seat held the jeans in place–whether a cowboy was kneeling, bending, rolling or wading streams.

The styling became the classic cut. Its every detail the hallmark of a great pair of jeans.

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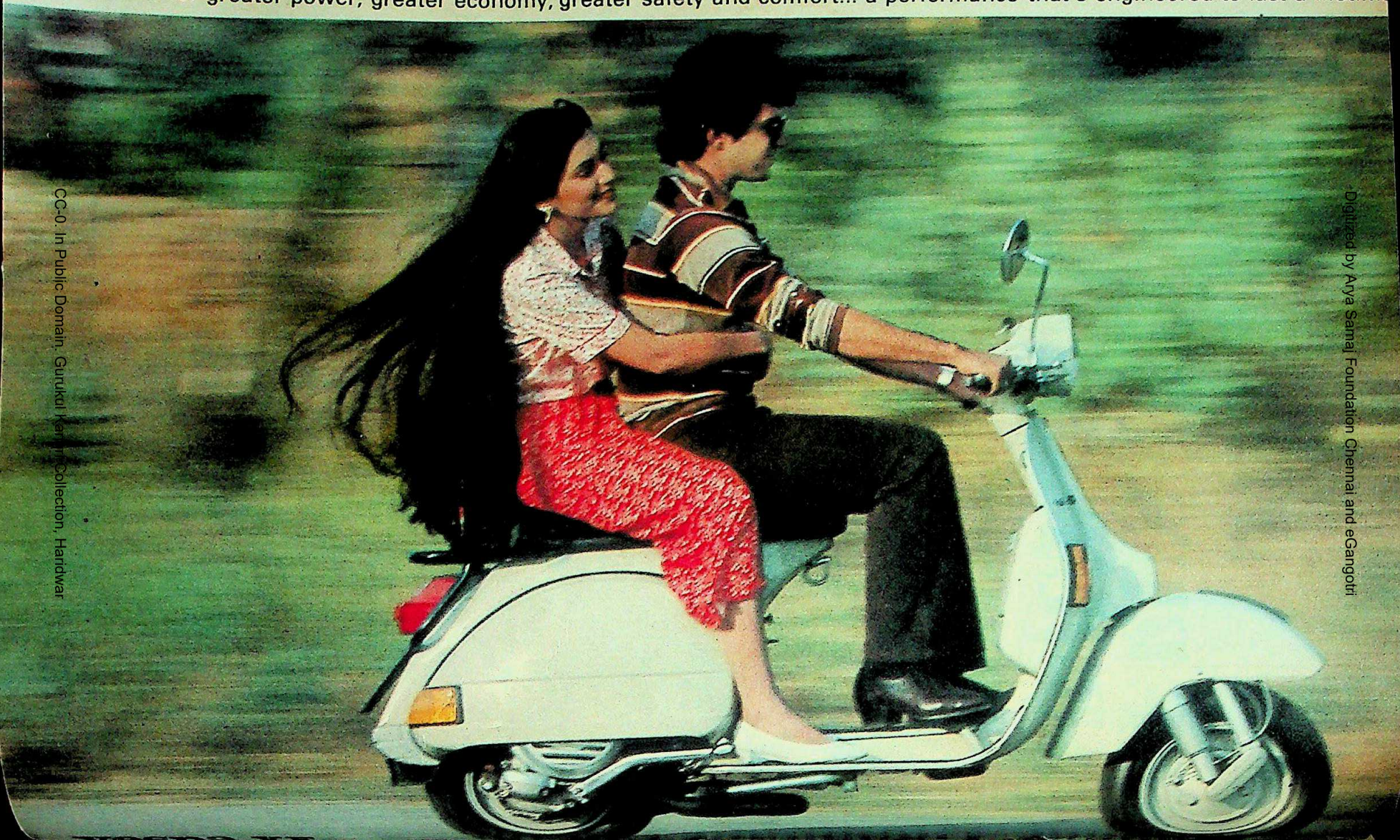

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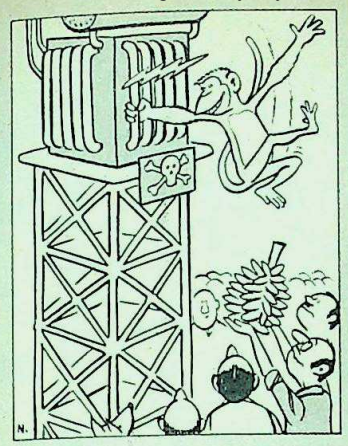
NIMAL POWER

If God were present in dia, he would be shouting nself hoarse with "Let there light!" so much have power akdowns become a fact of in the cities. The reasons ge from the rat that was ving a ball in the fuse box to bored worker playing 'She ves me, she loves me not' th the switch. Last fort- ht, however, it was a al menagerie that



brought the candles out in Chandur railway station, about 30 km from Amravati, Maharashtra.

A dog had been chasing a monkey round and round the platform, at first in play, and then with the hunter's gleam in its eye. Finally, the monkey clambered up to the transformer of the power station and sat there making faces at the dog.

The officials of the Maharashtra State Electricity Board, who rushed to the spot with all their heavy artillery, managed to drive the dog away. Then they just stood around for three hours, first putting off all the switches so that the town had no power for about three hours. In the end, somebody had the bright idea of luring the monkey down with a basket-load of fruits. Only then, while the monkey munched away contentedly, did God's prophecy come true.

UT OF TUNE

Politicians provide dless entertainment for the blic and when they are in sitions of power and come ministers, they seem think that all the world's a ge with themselves playing e joker. One such amusing rsonality recently revealed s talent to the world in llage Masauli, Barabanki strict, Bihar. He is Gopal ram Das, a minister of state Bihar.

It so happened that a function was organised in Masauli to observe the death anniversary of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, a former Central minister. Masauli was Kidwai's village and the entire community had turned out to honour its respected son. Das was the chief guest.

When the master of ceremonies turned to him, Das got up and with great and fitting dignity walked to the mike. Clearing his throat, he spoke: "Ladies and

gentlemen, you are all aware that we have gathered here to pay homage to a personality who was not only a great singer but created a storm in every corner of the country with some of his songs . . . ."

Taken aback by this tribute, the organisers and the audience pulled long faces. But Das went on speaking and only afterwards was he told that the function was in honour of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and not playback singer Mohammed Rafi.

PERATION FLOOD

Is Bharat the land of milk d honey? Not quite. But for e glorious day, the town Palghat, Kerala, was undated with milk in a flood protest. The white deluge se out of the grievances of umber of milk cooperative cieties who felt that the overnment-owned dairy velopment board ought to rchase their milk directly m them at a reasonable

price, cutting out the middlemen.

The dairy development board, however, did not appear to be any too enthusiastic about accepting the demand, so the cooperative societies, displaying an admirable sense of cooperation, decided to pull together. Loads of milk containers arrived at the district town in the morning. The authorities were wondering at this concerted influx when the *doodhwallas* came out with all guns blazing.

One after the other, they emptied the cans into the streets. Soon, the gutters were full of milk streaming away to glory, and pursued, according to one report, by a horde of cats and dogs driven frantic by the manna. When the deluge ended, the cooperative members asked the board, once again and very politely, to buy the milk directly from them.

OTER IN DRAG

Indian democracy has deed come of age. In the sembly elections in Andhra adesh one voter proved this January 5. Konda Reddy Chigicharla village in harmavaram constituency out to vote on the great y. However, the polling icer told him that he could vote as he was named in

the voting list as 'Kondyamma' and was thus a woman. Reddy argued with the officer in charge of the booth but in vain.

Reddy went home in a huff. About an hour later, the booth officer saw a familiar face standing in line. It was Reddy again, but this time in resplendent drag, attired in a sari and blouse. Disregarding the stares, Reddy went up to the officer and said: "My name is Kondyamma. Can I cast my vote please?" Minutes later, with an enticing flick of his *pallav*, Reddy went behind the curtain with his ballot paper. A subdued rustle of paper, a decisive thud of the stamp and Konda Reddy/Kondyamma walked to the ballot box, pushed his/her ballot in, winked at all present and undulated out.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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Is your battery costing you your engine

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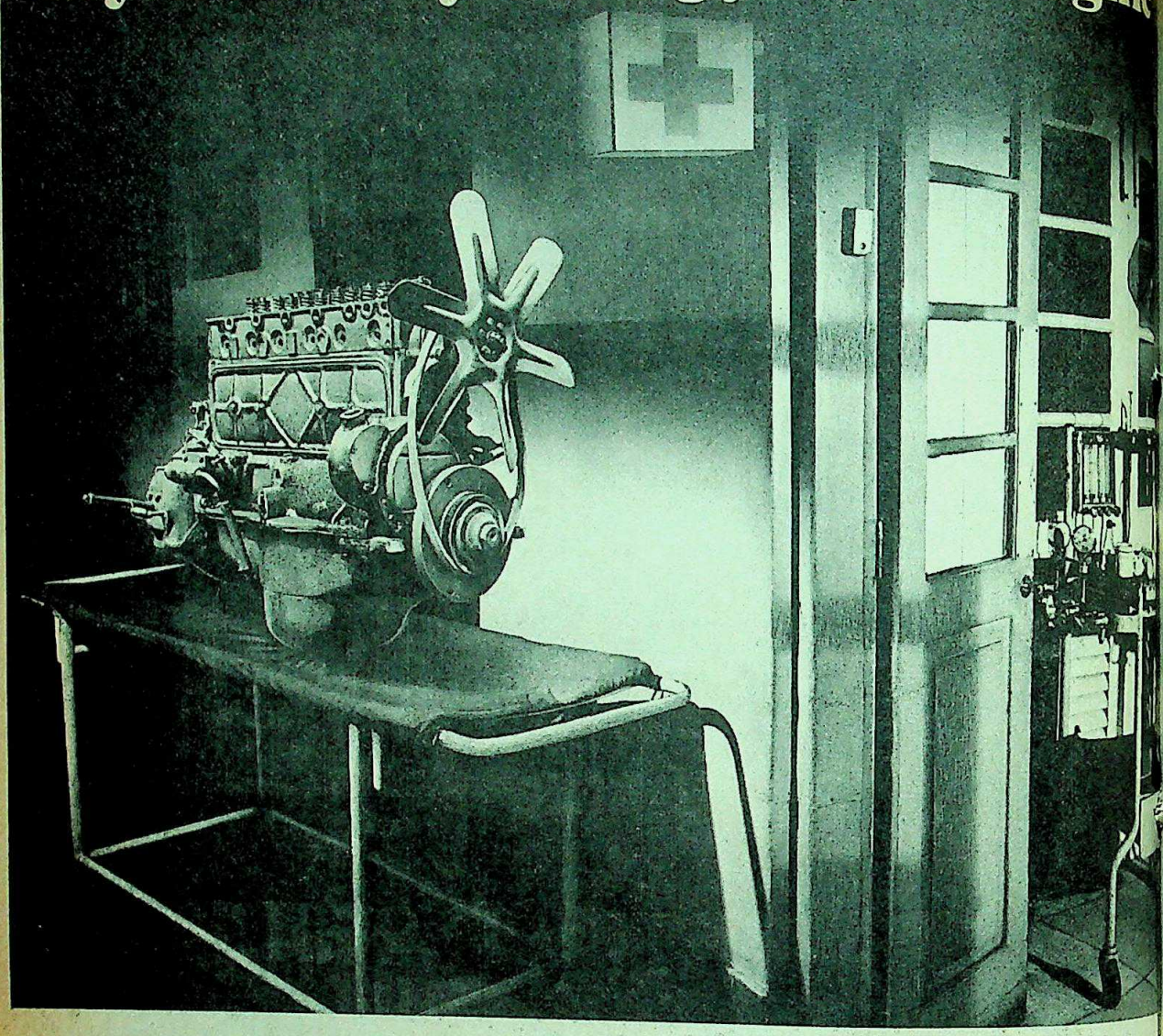
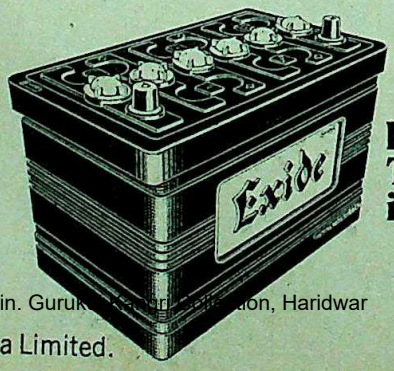


A bargain battery seems like a bargain only when it's bought. But when it really starts costing more, a lot more, then the thrill of a bargain soon evaporates. Yes. A bargain battery can actually cost you your engine in the long run. Let's see how:

A bargain battery is a reconditioned battery. Your battery will soon take a longer time and many cranks to start your engine. And this will result in higher fuel consumption because of incomplete combustion. This can lead to carbon deposits on your engine. Deposits, which could, over time, damage your engine.

An inefficient battery would require a push start. And a push start can do damage. It will give a jerk to the clutch, transmission rod, differential and can damage them over time.

So you see, a bargain battery ultimately no bargain at all. Depe on Exide. The first name in batte for decades. For long life, instan start, minimum maintenance and protection of your vehicle. In fact, Exide turns out to be the best bargain in the long run. Wri its performance.



From the makers of Exid The largest selling batte in India.

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Rediffusion

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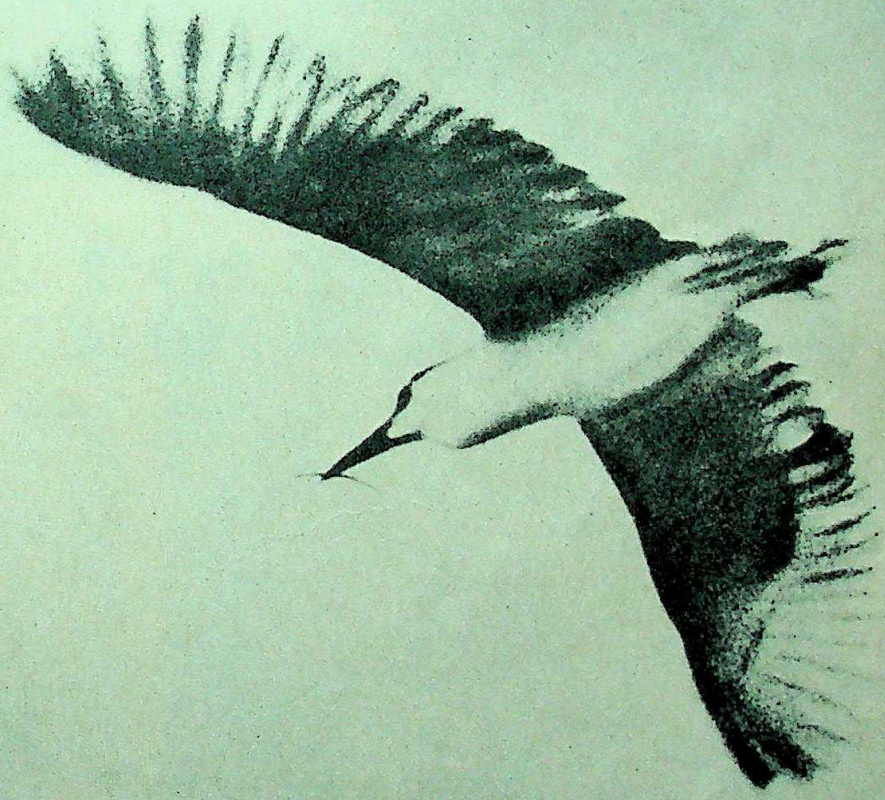
Towards another year of faith and hope



Season's Greetings

from

ALLAHABAD BANK

(A Government of India Undertaking)

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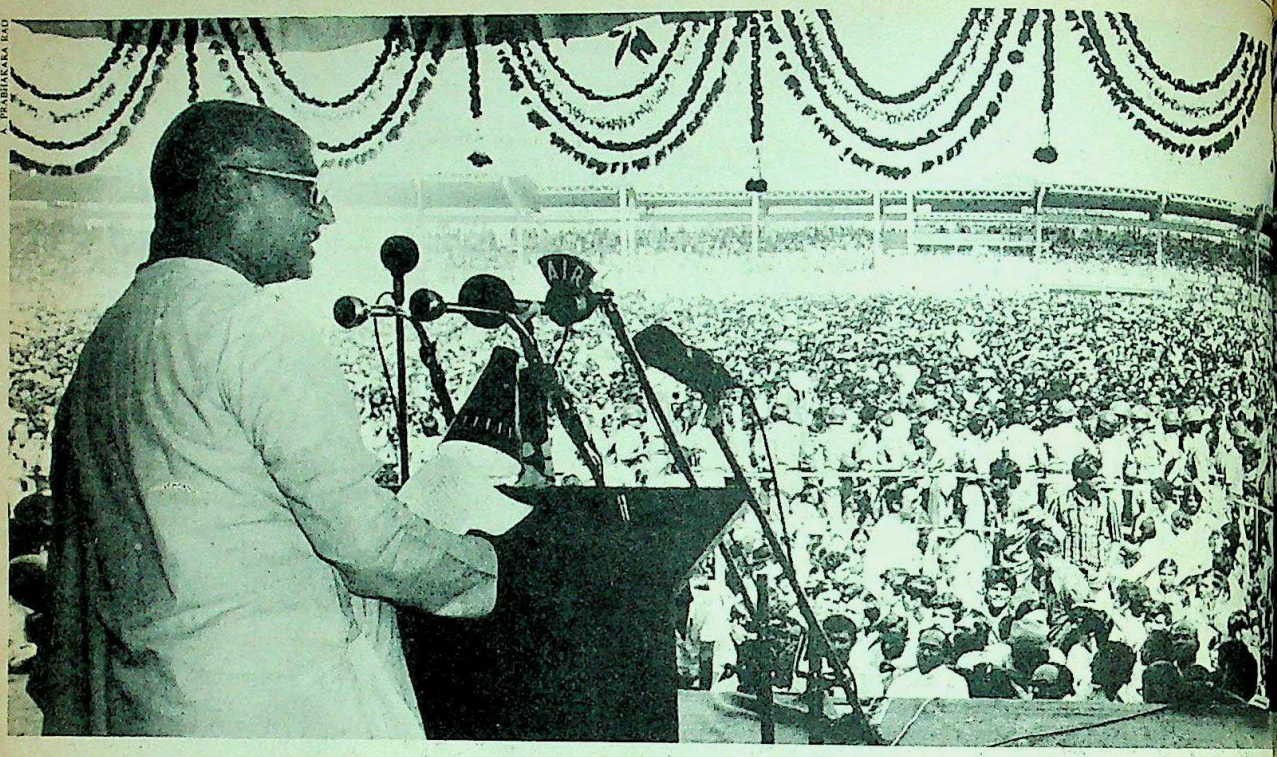
A. PRABHAKARA RAO



N.T. Rama Ra
ceremony:

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

The Crash Of '83

IT HAD all the ferocity and sweep of a Bay of Bengal cyclone. Also its unpredictability. When it had been brewing in the dark coils of nimbus, hardly anyone noticed it. When it struck, so stunning was the punch that there was no time to run for cover. Stretching from the jagged coastline of Andhra Pradesh to the western borders of Karnataka, the strong and unequivocal rejection of Mrs Gandhi and her party blew like a storm of wild and elemental fury.

It was the common man, the 'voterji', striking again. He struck once in 1967, and as many as 11 Congress-led state governments rolled overboard. He struck again in 1971, and the fabled "massive mandate" put Mrs Gandhi at the shadowy pinnacle of Indian politics. He did it once more in 1977, removing her from power like flicking off a particle of dust. In 1980, it was the same voter who re-installed her on the pedestal, hoping that she would have learnt from experience, and signalling a firm thumbs-down to the Janata anarchy.

This time round, the humble voter came in from nowhere and gave Mrs Gandhi a drubbing right in her citadel, the two states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, where 5.12 crore electors live. The southern tornado left in its wake debris of shattered myths: the myth about her invincibility in the south; about her charisma; about the proven efficacy of the Congress(I) machinery to garner a certain minimum of votes even at the worst of times; about her undying popularity among women, the minority communities and the weaker sections of the people. As results poured in from the 518 constituencies in the two crucial southern states, Mrs Gandhi's share of seats had nosedived from 429 MLA's to a measly 140.

Bitter Taste: For the Congress, with or without the 'I' affixed to it, this was the first bitter taste of defeat in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. As N.T. Rama Rao bulldozed his way to power in an unprecedented victory march in Andhra Pradesh, and Ramakrishna Hegde, a Rajya Sabha member of the Janata Party, was sworn into office in Karnataka after a close race, history was being written anew.

Since the birth of the two states in 1956 following the reorganisation of states, no party other than the Congress ever rode to power in Hyderabad and Bangalore. Now among the four southern the Congress(I) is all but finished for a toe-hold in power—that too junior partner in a coalition with rious majority—in just one state, K

As a teleprinter spewed news debacle from around January 6 the chill of Delhi had entered the quite a few members of the Co high command. By 2 p.m., the connecting the prime minister's to makeshift control rooms in B and Hyderabad were buzzing wi mittent volleys of disaster news far-flung districts. The initial reac the capital, as well as in Bangal Hyderabad, bordered on one paralysis. The Union ministers we once discreetly unavailable for c The All India Congress Com (AICC-I) office on Akbar Road as Safdarjang Road wore a sepulch only shamianas erected a day joyful expectancy stood in ironic to the prevailing mood.

In Hyderabad, Gandhi Bha Congress(I) office in the downto lay under a canopy of gloom. morning of January 6, the p Lake View guest-house, meant f

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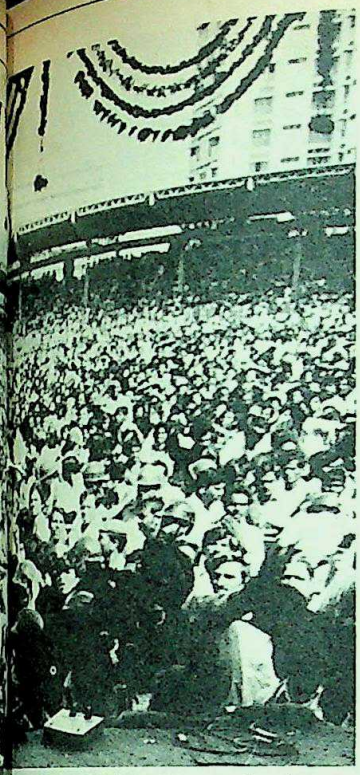

N.T. Rama Rao at his swearing-in ceremony: making history

chock-a-block with visiting Central ...gs, like Union Industries Minister ...n Dutt Tiwari, AICC (I) treasurer Si... Kesari, Union Minister of State for ...e, P. Venkatasubbiah, and the ...ity MP from Rae Bareli and Mrs ...dhi's fourth cousin, Arun Nehru. By ...vening, most of them had winged out ...e city, leaving long-faced local bosses ...ttle with campaign transporters the ...ing accounts.

Future Strategy: The atmosphere was ...ss gloomy in Bangalore, the only dif...ce being that the close margin of vic...gained by the Opposition left the ...u Rao coterie with some elbow-room ...ink out future strategy. Rao himself ...in his resignation by the evening, but ... were discernible pep-talks in his ...b of carrying out a Haryana-style ope...

...wardly, Congressmen were sick all ...the country. The numbing fear of an ...ment wipe-out gripped their hearts. ...upshot of the January poll had grim ...odings for the Congress(I): the ...ber of states administered by it in the ...n of 22 had tumbled down to 14. ...e June 1980, Mrs Gandhi has not been ... to secure absolute majority in seven ...e eight state assembly elections. The ...s where she failed to win majority of ... are: Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, ...Bengal, Nagaland, and now Tripura, ...ra Pradesh and Karnataka. It is only

Mrs Gandhi: shocking defeat

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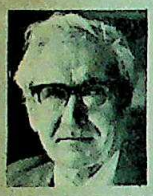
in Kerala that she could win a government without defections, but that too with only 20 of her MLA's in the winning coalition.

In fact, since June 1980, the 'hand' symbol of her party has been able to clinch only 312 of the 1,150 seats it has contested. But no defeat suffered by the Congress(I) in the past years was so cataclysmic in its sweep and thrust as the one this month. It trampled on Congress(I) edifices in the two states like the mad charge of a rogue elephant. Every second minister in the two states got rejected by the electors. The Congress(I)'s share of votes tumbled down fr... by about 7 per cent in Karnataka ... cent in Andhra Pradesh. Compare... party's performance in 1980 parl... polls, which returned Mrs Ga... power with a two-thirds majority, ... was along a precipitous drop ...

DAVID BUTLER

Expert View



INDIANS must love democracy. I have been a professional observer of many elections in America and in Australia as well as in my own country but I do not think I have ever been as impressed by an election as a popular festival as I was last week. A newcomer to India, I jolted down country roads, around Hyderabad looking at the patient queues of voters, the meticulous officials, the excited knots of partisans. And I saw, or thought I saw, a remarkable commitment to the processes of democratic choice. And observing the very successful experiment with the advanced voting machines, I felt that I was coming from a developing to a developed country.

Not that I'm uncritical. I can't say that the alternatives offered to the voters of Andhra Pradesh seemed, either of them, very inspiring. And I was a bit puzzled by the coverage of the results and the comment on them. The newspapers and still more the broadcasters seemed very slow to catch the trend. On the night of Thursday, January 6, I met a very senior official who assured me that the result was wide open, although anyone with an eye for the trends could have seen the inevitable five hours earlier. And the politicians themselves appeared oddly reluctant to make any statements about what was happening, even when they were winning.

Indians believe that India is unique. And of course it is—special and wonderful and difficult. But a lot of the rules that apply to the rest of the world do in fact apply to India. Election results, as the accompanying article shows, have their regularities: it is possible to project trends from an early report to a final outcome and to assume that neighbouring seats (and even neighbouring states) will, on average, behave in a similar fashion. Equally it must be possible to conduct reliable opinion polls in India, as it is in every other major democracy. Obviously in dealing with so huge and diverse a population special problems are posed by caste and sect and literacy. But any difficulties are certainly surmountable. I remember being told 20 years ago, after polling had become well established in Britain, that it would never work in Ireland—the Irish character would always deceive the interviewer who'd face answers like 'Well now that's an interesting question. And what would you be thinking yourself?' But very soon polls did become established in Ireland and they have a respectable record in election forecasting there.

Volatile Electors: INDIA TODAY's opinion poll did not fare well in Andhra Pradesh. Why? The last 30 years have seen a lot of good poll forecasts (including some in India) of elections and a few disasters. The disasters have sometimes been due to the chances of sampling and sometimes to errors in the field, and sometimes to inadequate allowance for the 'don't knows' and the refusals. But the most common cause—and the one that I would guess was most important in Andhra Pradesh—is late swing; voters have every right to change their minds in the two weeks between the interview date and the actual voting. Election in India (as in Britain) are becoming increasingly volatile and, faced with a totally new party, they might well switch at the last moment. The evidence is lacking, but I'd certainly sympathise with pollsters offering this explanation.

Election forecasting is not in itself very important—but it does provide a supreme public test of opinion poll methodology. Democracy is about popular control of what those who rule them do. It cannot be left just to the occasional visit to the voting booth. A more continuous discourse is needed. Therefore the establishment of a competent and respected opinion polling industry must be on balance a great asset to any democracy.

David Butler, a Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford, has been on a short visit to India. He has written many books about electoral systems and about British electoral behaviour.

PSEPHOLOGY

Big Swing

THE CONGRESS(I) de... Andhra Pradesh was ... mainly by a massive, ... state-wide swing away from the ... party of about 9–10 per cent ... swing was 12 per cent in the Te... region, which is the only part ... state to return a reasonable ... 43 out of 107—of Congress(I) ... dates. It was, ironically, less ... coastal districts—9 per cent ... Rayalseema—10 per cent, wh... party was virtually wiped ou... Congress(I) was able to keep a ... Telangana only because its ... margins the last time round ... were large; if N.T. Rama Rao ha... time to campaign in this north... gion of the state, the sweep co... have been total. As it is, in the ... this negative vote, there were ... ckets in the Telangana region w... Congress(I) gained from a slight ...

For the state as a whole, ... the Congress(I) showing was ... On polling day, January 5, th... faced a double blow: its vote s... to 30.5 per cent from nearly 40 p... in 1978. And the Opposition vo... polarised around the Telugu ... party which attracted 45.7 per ce... bagged over 70 per cent, or 202 ... 293 seats it contested. The result ... the Congress(I) vote dropped by ... one-third, its share of seats ... Assembly fell by two-thirds to 6...

A comparison of the 198... with that of the 1978 outcome ... that about 60 seats were lost bec... the polarisation of the Opposiho... around a single party, and anot... seats because of the swing in ... the 10 homogeneous swing ... regions within which voters ... move together, seven showed a ... of more than 10 per cent awa... the Congress(I) to the Telugu ... another two of slightly less than ... cent, while just one zone—a sm... in the north-east (*see map*) sta... to the Congress(I).

Within the homogeneous swing...

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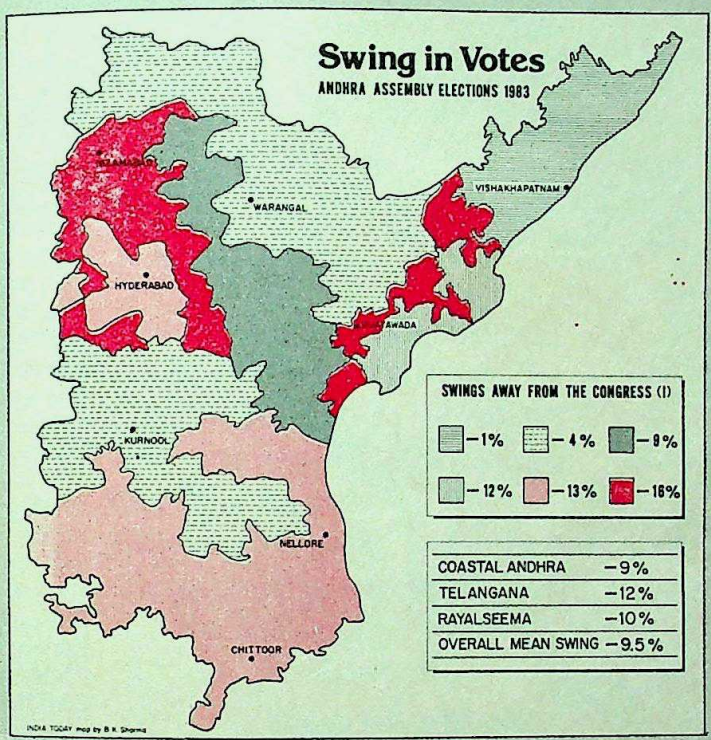
over 56 per cent in both the states, it led down to over 35 per cent in ataka and 30 per cent in Andhra. The outcome of the two elections r aside all the preconceived notions t Mrs Gandhi's abiding vote banks. Harijans had stood by her at all times. But this time, out of the 33 reserved seats for Scheduled Caste candidates in Karnataka, the Congress(I) won in only nine. The party had 26 Scheduled Caste seats in the dissolved House.

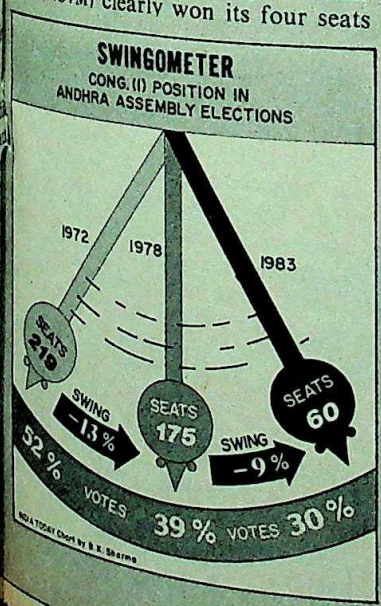
Share Reduced: Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, where the Congress(I) had occupied 34 of the 39 Scheduled Caste seats, its share was drastically reduced to eight. Equally strong was the anti-Congress(I) shift of Muslim votes in the two states. The Congress(I) candidate came a cropper in each of the 13 constituencies of Hyderabad city, including five Muslim-dominated

however, there was some unusual movement. In 67 assembly constituencies, Congress(I) support actually increased, which may in part have been due to the Congress(S) vote of 1978 moving back to the Congress(I).

This little glimmer was overshadowed by other trends revealed by the voting pattern. The Scheduled Castes, a solid vote bank for the Congress(I) in the past, appear to have deserted in the 50 reserved constituencies in the state, the swing away from the Congress(I) was generally higher than the average, being 14.1 per cent in the state's 39 Scheduled Caste constituencies and 12 per cent in the 11 Scheduled Tribe constituencies. The erosion of this traditional support was widespread: in every one of the 10 swing zones, the reserved constituencies moved away from the Congress(I) with seven showing swings higher than the state average.

Varying Turnout: Although Maneka Gandhi's Sanjay Vichar Manch (SVM) clearly won its four seats on the coat-tails of the Telugu Desam, the voting pattern shows that the SVM carried a small punch of its own. The average swing in the five constituencies it contested was about 15 per cent, significantly higher than the state's average.





But Prime Minister Indira Gandhi can take some comfort from the voting trend in her own Medak parliamentary constituency. Though she lost one assembly segment to the SVM—and there could hardly be a more severe blow—and another three to Telugu Desam, in the seven that make up the parliamentary constituency the Congress(I) outvoted Telugu Desam by 43 per cent to 38, showing a lingering loyalty to Mrs Gandhi who won the Lok Sabha seat in 1980 with a massive 65 per cent of the vote. Interestingly, independents won 16.6 per cent of the Medak vote.

Last fortnight's elections also showed up differing voting patterns between state assembly voting and Lok Sabha elections. Voting took place simultaneously in Nellore for the vacant Lok Sabha seat and the local assembly constituency. The turnout was higher for the assembly seat than for the parliamentary seat even though the booths were next to each other. More than 14,000 voters out of those who voted for the assembly contest decided against casting a vote for the Lok Sabha election. Then, the vote for the successful Telugu Desam candidate was higher at 60.3 per cent in the Lok Sabha poll than it was at 57.7 per cent for the assembly seat.

Electronic Facilities: Nellore at 42 per cent also recorded one of the most disastrous swings away from the Congress(I) in the assembly poll. The biggest swing in its favour was Pulivendla in Rayalseema which swung an incredible 52 per cent towards the Congress(I) in favour, ironically enough, of Rajasekhar Reddy who crossed to the Congress(I) from the Opposition.

One major innovation in last fortnight's elections was the use of voting machines. These excellent though expensive machines were tried out in one seat in each of the three states. In Shadnagar, south of Hyderabad, voters in the most backward villages used them without difficulty. The machines may even have encouraged voter turnout, which was 68 per cent—3 per cent higher than in the adjacent constituencies. Also, the Shadnagar result was available at 8 p.m. on the same day, 16 hours before any other result. Shadnagar was headlined as a Congress(I) victory.

Perhaps this result misled the media, for there was only a 2 per cent swing, with no indication of the 10 per cent landslide that was to come. Had there been a few more constituencies with electronic voting facilities, perhaps the sweep of the Telugu Desam victory could have been gauged much earlier than it was. As it was, hardly anybody saw the Congress(I) debacle coming.

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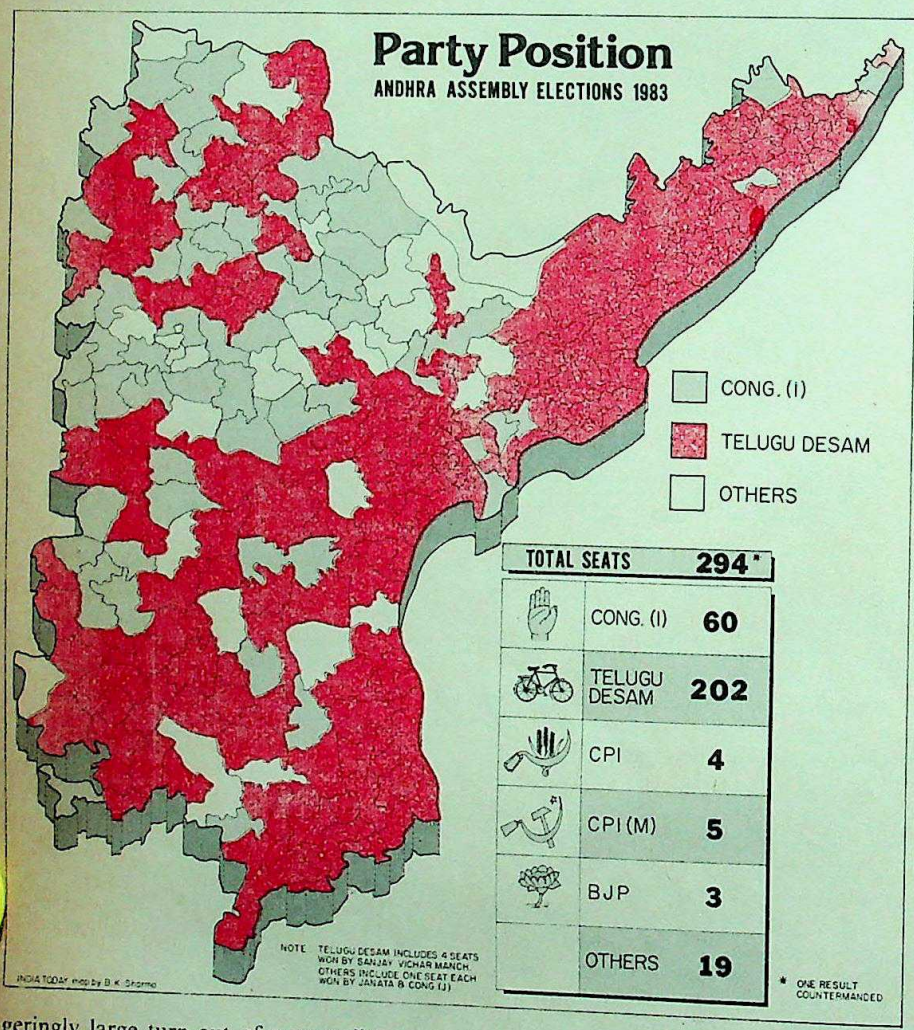
constituencies which were wrested by the fledgeling Majlis Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen. In the Chitradurga district of Karnataka, where Muslims have sizeable share of the population, the Congress(I) bagged only two of the 11 seats.

Women's votes have always been Mrs Gandhi's forte, so much so that even in 1977, when her popularity was at its nadir in north India, the Janata demagogues could catch relatively few women listeners in their campaign rallies. But Rama Rao, in his campaign trail, induced a staggeringly large turn-out of women listeners even at his whistlestop rallies.

Equally conspicuous was the Congress(I)'s near-total rout from the urban areas, a fact which will no doubt cast its shadow on Mrs Gandhi's future electoral prospects in the metropolises, the centres from where public opinion seeps downward. In Bangalore city (population: 2.9 million), all the 15 seats contested were lost by the Congress(I); it had nine of them in the dissolved House. In Hyderabad (population: 2.5 million), the Congress(I) was defeated in all the 13 constituencies.

The obliteration of the Congress(I) from certain regions of the two states was dramatic. In the whole of coastal Andhra, comprising a densely-populated conglomeration of 134 constituencies, the Congress(I) barely managed to win nine seats. In the Rayalseema area, it could carry only eight of the 53 seats. In Medak, the parliamentary constituency that sent Mrs Gandhi to the Lok Sabha in 1980, her candidates lost in five out of the seven Assembly seats. To rub salt into her wound, one of the seats went to the Sanjay Vichar Manch led by her rebellious daughter-in-law, Maneka Gandhi. The Chikmagalur constituency in Karnataka, which returned Mrs Gandhi to the Lok Sabha in 1978 regardless of her collapse in the north a year earlier, this time voted so firmly against her that only one of the seven Congress(I) candidates could reach the winning post.

In Andhra Pradesh, it was an across-the-board rejection of the Congress(I) rule. In Karnataka, if the wave has been a shade gentler, it is because there was no towering personality like Rao there to shepherd the ballots into single winning box. The local situations in the two states differed, but not the message of the elections. For Mrs G it was a deafening, total and unmistakable "no".



THE FIRST shock over, the leaders of the Congress(I) the game they are good at the buck. Said a member of the powered Congress(I) Parliamentary (CPB-I): "The party in Andhra was put to its grave by four under Channa Reddy, T. Anjiah, the press led by *Eenadu*, and the screen of Rama Rao. In Karnataka, the hangman was its own chief Gundu Rao." G.K. Moopanar, general secretary, in one of his election press conferences smugly "Mrs Gandhi's personal charisma undiminished."

The party obviously wants to stop at the state capitals and rather bury its head in sand that that the charisma of Mrs Gandhi But the explanation hardly India as well as abroad. Commenting the elections, *The Times* of London "The people had voted against Gandhi's determination to instal creatures as chief ministers." *The G* noted that the electorate had served prime minister "with due warning dynastic politics, an arrogant and list desire to reward friends and enemies" may not be enough in elections two years away.

The efforts to lay it all at the of the chief ministers carried little tion with the Indian press too. Writing *The Statesman*, Amalendu Dasgupta daily's Calcutta editor, described mitigated nonsense" the view that dict was against the state administration and not against Mrs Gandhi. Wrote lal Jain, editor of the generally tive *Times of India*: "Mrs Gandhi suffered a body-blow in Andhra Karnataka. It was her election, not fiction called the Congress...."

Comforting Pat: However, hurly-burly was done, Mrs Gandhi look unfazed. Senior Central Parliamentary Board (CPB) member P.V. Narasimha Rao, himself a chief minister of Andhra Pradesh Pranab Mukherjee, the pipe-puffing nance minister and high-profile man, met her on January 6 minutes after the final complexion two state assemblies had become

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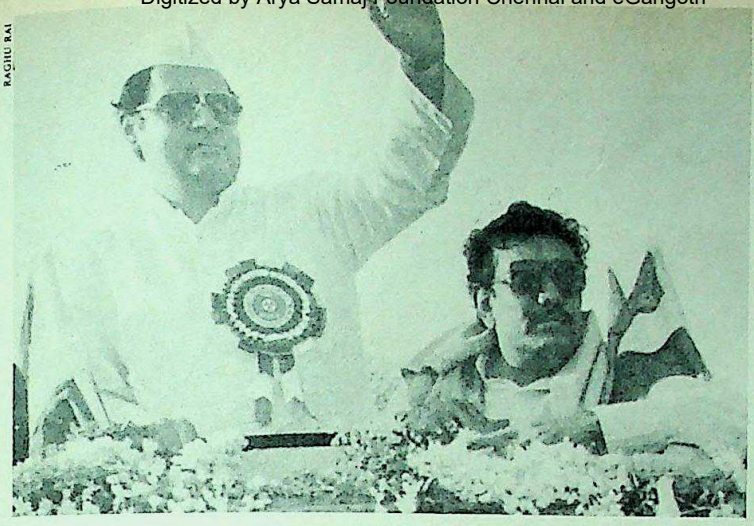
reportedly told them nobody was at fault that it was not the to despair. Her office n ringing up each defeat- ongress(I) member indi- lly, and she spoke nally to over a hundred men over the phone in days following the de- tion of the results.

Her attempts to build es with the party came late in the day. At no had local party workers ore alienated from the oneering process than the January polls. For Congress(I), the keyword ndhra Pradesh and Karnataka imposition: imposition of men other state; imposition of stuff- irts as chief ministers; imposi- of a campaign style formulated e AICC(I); even imposition of o-scientific computer forecasts gut reactions and native hunches. The high command went about usiness smugly, making use of intelligence services to a point of sion, violating all norms of con-

D.R. Karthikeyan, deputy ins- -general of police for intelli- in Karnataka, was directed by u Rao and the Central Intelli- e Bureau (IB) to scan the list of gress(I) nomination-seekers in the and to carry out a trend analysis e constituencies for the Con- (I) candidates. The matter is al- a hot issue in the state, and ikeyan has been sent on leave he new Government pending a

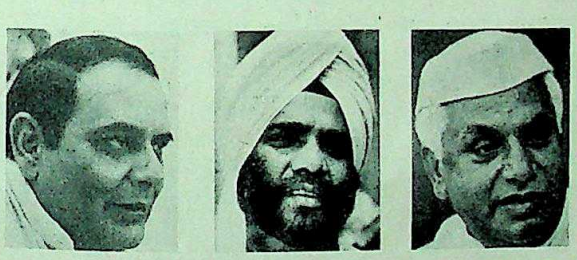
Earlier, the high command went t on an intelligence-gathering fielding 24 officials of the IB in two states, assisted by s of state cops and 'in- d' partymen. A 'map sprang up at 1, Akbar the office attached to residence of the prime ster, and the high com- d proceeded to docket tituencies under labels read: very safe, safe, erline and unsafe. How e were such visions of y was proved as events iled themselves: of the 46 seats marked off in taka, the party won in 21). On the other hand it home in 7 of 23 deter-



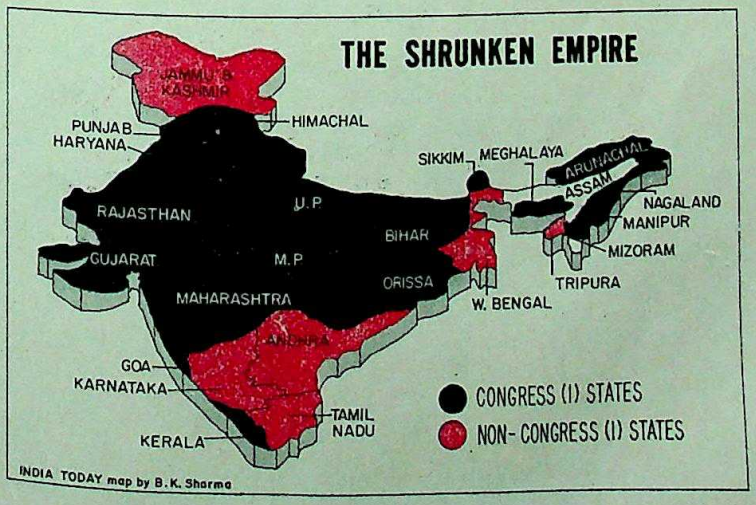
RAGHU RAI

Rajiv Gandhi and Gundu Rao: the touch of failure

The imposition syndrome marked even the party's campaign style, cramping it with empty rhetoric and blunting its edge by the use of a large battery of north Indian Congressmen with virtually no idea of the politics of the south.



Arun Nehru, Buta Singh and Tiwari: out of depth



mined earlier to be "unsafe".

Misfiring: The imposition syndrome marked even the party's campaign style, cramping it with empty rhetoric, and blunting its edge by the use of a large battery of north Indian Congressmen with virtually no idea of the politics of the south. The mistaken notion that Rajiv Gandhi, by virtue of successfully managing the Asiad, would possess just that extra aura to carry the southern electorate, boomerangedon the party much to its discomfiture.

Arun Nehru, on his part, jet-hopped for three weeks between Hyderabad and Bangalore. He perched himself at Bangalore's Ashok Hotel and summoned S.D. Sharma as well as K. Karunakaran, Kerala chief minister and AICC observer for Karnataka, to his room with his characteristic peremptoriness. Both he and Rajiv cancelled their election programmes in Tripura as they felt the necessity of their presence in the south to be overpowering —not that it turned out to be of much help anyway.

The strange army of Congress(I) campaigners which descended on the scene made a disconcerting spectacle. Of the 97 MP's and MLA's from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Haryana, handpicked by Rajiv and Nehru, 60 were just greenhorns—having won elections only for the first time, or having short-circuited their way to the Upper House.

A classic example is that of Devendra Pandey, the MLA from Uttar Pradesh who had made history by hijacking an Indian Airlines aircraft in 1978. He was made the AICC(I) 'commissar' for nine constituencies in Bangalore city. Pandey, whose Sultanpur assembly constituency borders on Rajiv's parliamentary constituency of Amethi, failed to 'hijack' a single Bangalore seat this time round.

The campaign theme of the Congress(I) bore no relation to local realities. Both Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv, star campaigners, belaboured the weaknesses of the Opposition, and alleged threats from abroad and other such subjects

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Rama Rao and Maneka Gandhi on the campaign trail: striking an emotional chord

which had little relevance to rural audiences. Rajiv Gandhi's so-called image came in for a brazen oversell. Large hoardings made out of his photograph, reading "Hope of the Nation", and issued by the AICC(I), stared out at onlookers from impressive heights all over Bangalore and Hyderabad. In his speeches, Rajiv dwelt on the need to work hard and shoulder responsibility, and subjects as abstruse as productivity, Indian Ocean security and the success of the Asiad, most of which seemed irksomely out of place to his rural audiences who were more concerned with bread and butter issues. In the event, as Nikhil Chakravartty wrote in *The Telegraph*: "If unwisdom is not the guiding star of the Indira camp, then these selfstyled management-culturists are doomed. The young affectionate Appu of Indiramma seems to have been trampled to nonentity by the rogue elephant of Telugu Desam."

Said a former Andhra Pradesh Congress(I) minister who was defeated by an unknown Telugu Desam candidate: "We were supposed to collect campaign flags from an Uttar Pradesh leader, cars from a Bihari, and posters from someone coming in from Madhya Pradesh." Not even the outside observers felt relaxed and confident. It made a pitiable sight when Narain Dutt Tiwari was chastised by one of Rajiv's 'managers' publicly for the party's poor show in Andhra Pradesh. The post-election scene abounded with sacrificial goats.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Conquering Hero

IN ANDHRA Pradesh, the debacle occurred because of a hopelessly unequal battle of two charismas: Rama Rao's powerful ascendant appeal which convincingly decimated the once-powerful popularity of Mrs Gandhi. The Telugu Messiah, who presented himself as a genuine, home-grown, Telugu spirited alternative, decisively turned Mrs Gandhi's dwindling popularity into a rich electoral harvest. Had he not descended from the screen to stake a claim, the choice before the electorate would have been limited to Mrs Gandhi's candidates on the one hand and the motley crowd of tired and lack-lustre orthodox opposition candidates on the other.

The conventional Opposition, which felt the cutting edge of the Telugu Desam campaign no less than the Congress(I), has never offered a real alternative in the state. The two communist parties who were once powerful in the Telangana region lost their bite following successive splits and desertion from their ranks. The Janata Party has no organisational base except in some pockets of Telangana while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) can count on a constituency only in a handful of urban pockets.

Rama Rao was able to outdo Mrs Gandhi because his screen image, massaged into the Telugu mind through 300 films in 33 years, identified him with virtues extolled by his canny screen writers: honesty, morality, fearlessness, altruism. In a state like Andhra Pradesh where 70 per cent of the people are without formal education, the real-life Rao and his celluloid personality were easily blended and inevitably formed a explosive political mixture. It was as before Rama Rao's charisma sprang from the poorly educated countryside to the urban areas, and swelled into a wave of tidal proportions.

Pin-pointing Decay: In an unprecedented nine-month long campaign, in which he travelled over 35,000 km and was seen and heard by more than 3 crore people, Rama Rao successfully identified the shortcomings of the state Government, its corruption and decay, with the image of its protector, Mrs Gandhi. Admitted a top Congress(I) functionary: "It is just as soon that we announced the elections when we did. If Rama Rao had one more month campaigning in the Telangana region, 60 seats would have been reduced to 30."

Some of the state's Congress(I) voters were sitting ducks any way. A rabble-rousing crusader, not to speak of a leader of Rama Rao's calibre in articulate to the masses with professional finesse. For instance, Nedurumalli Janardhan Reddy, minister in several Andhra cabinets, aspirant for chief ministership for over years, was involved in several scandals, land-grabbing and misappropriation in his native Nellore district.

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defeated by a Telugu Desam candi- with a convincing margin of over votes. G. Venkataswamy, a Harijan who was made head of the state ress(I) barely two weeks before the on, was dragged into a scandal over ing of prime industrial land in the irts of Hyderabad when he was a ster in the earlier cabinets. The high mand advised him against contesting ar of losing the election. Among the ministers who fell by the wayside Gogineni Nageswara Rao, who lost by votes, Vemanna (by 15,000 votes), N. rababu Naidu, Rama Rao's son-in- by 18,000 votes), Paladugu Venkata nd Chanamolu Venkata Rao (by 5,000 each).

Analysing the unexpected ease with the film star-turned- ian had swamped the ress(I) bastion, a for- chief minister said: stink of corruption, iency and the greed ke money is the basic n for the defeat." The became a deadlier ent for the voters as Rao rubbed in the that the Centre, by g chief ministers on ate at its own will, was trampling upon the respect of the Telugu e."

He relentlessly attacked Gandhi for her choice ndhra chief ministers. was chosen despite that he lost the 1978 n; Bhavanam Venkat- stepped in even though as just an MLC and had faced an election. Rao meanwhile ham- the point that Mrs hi had ceased to take eople of the state into ence while appointing inisters. The line of paid rich dividends se it touched a raw in the Telugu people. Kasu Brahmananda y, 73, elder statesman former chief minister of te, observed: "At no should people be taken granted. This applies to past, the present and the e."

When the crunch came, Congress(I) in Andhra sh was crushed like an empty egg shell. Its *de facto* administrative top, represented by the office of the chief minister, became almost like a railway waiting room; four chief ministers wove in and out of the secretariat in two years, with a staggering 177 ministers in tow. The party president was changed five times in 30 months, with district committees and lower tiers non-existent. There were just too many people in the party bearing designations prefixed with 'ex'—ex-president, ex-chief minister, ex-minister—with the result that the party itself is in danger of passing into oblivion.

Crowd Puller: As Rama Rao blitzed his way to the chief ministership, popular expectations shot up to dizzy heights. True to his showman-like style, he ordained to be sworn in at Hyderabad's Lal Bahadur Stadium, where an overflow crowd of over one lakh watched him take the oath of office in Telugu, his pate shaven clean following a ritual offering of hair at the Tirupati temple. Two men died in the stampede, frenetic listeners cheered him all the way as he delivered his brief speech, concluding it, reassuringly, with *Jai Hind*!

Obviously, Rama Rao had earlier unleashed fears of a growing regionalism when he included in his party's 29-point election manifesto such portentous intentions as to keep to the state Government all decision-making powers except defence, foreign affairs, currency and communications, "which should be under the purview of the Central Government". The brief *Jai Hind* cleared some doubts, but a good deal of fear persisted in Delhi about what kind of autonomy Rama Rao really had on his mind.

In fact, the main reason why the Telugu Desam caught public imagination is that it appealed to Telugu sentiments, a fact which is copiously reflected in the manifesto. In many ways, the manifesto is more radical on the issue of the Centre-state relations than the 36-point manifesto of the Left Front in West Bengal, which demanded more autonomy for the states in a guarded manner and yet became the target of some vicious attack. While the way Rama Rao conducts himself in defining his relations with the Centre will be anxiously watched, his immediate problem will no doubt emanate from the task of fulfilling many of his rather populist financial commitments.

A particularly thorny problem is to carry on with the midday meal scheme for the state's 62 lakh schoolchildren. The scheme was originally mooted by Rama Rao, but former chief minister Venkatram adopted it in a bid to pre-empt the Telugu Desam. It will impose on the state exchequer, already burdened with a deficit which may reach Rs 100 crore at the end of the financial year, a further commitment of Rs 95 crore. In addition, Rama

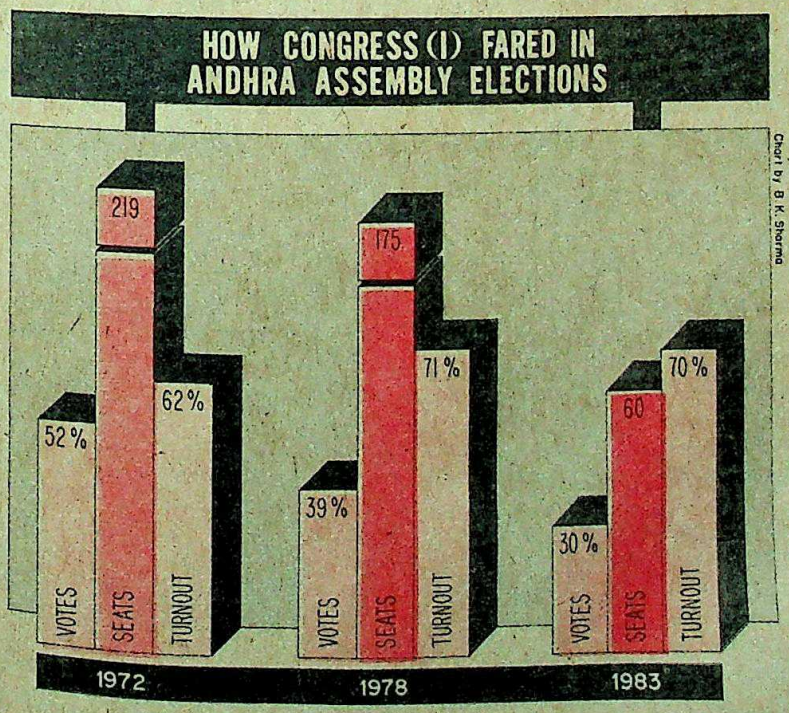
Channa Reddy

Anjiah

B. Venkatram

V.B. Reddy

The stink of corruption became a deadlier repellent for the voters as Rama Rao rubbed in the point that the Centre, by foisting chief ministers on the state at its own will, was indeed trampling upon the "self-respect of the Telugu people".



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Rao is going ahead with implementing his prepoll promise of limiting subsidised price of rice to Rs 2 a kg for certain sections of the people, the cost of which will be Rs 10.5 crore a year. There are no clear indications of how the Government could support these programmes.

Disciplinarian: Still, there was no dearth of novel and morale-boosting gestures. The day Rama Rao was unanimously chosen as the leader of the party's legislative wing, he announced a ten-point code of conduct for his MLA's which forbade them, apart from other things, to interfere with the administration by pushing cases for transfer or promotion. There was an air of no nonsense about the man which has already made the bureaucrats picture him as a strict disciplinarian. Said B.N. Raman, the state's chief secretary: "He appears to be a person determined to get things done."

The state officials, mostly grown slothful after years of easy existence, found it hard to cope with the 60-year-old man's speed and vitality. On the day he was sworn in, he drove straight from the Lal Bahadur Stadium to his office where he held a Cabinet meeting. After that he met senior secretaries to the state Government, and reviewed the situation in the riot-torn old Hyderabad city. He later visited a mosque, a temple, a church and a gurudwara, followed by a visit to Osmania Hospital where the wounded of the riots lay.

Said a bemused senior official: "Rama Rao has the great advantage of being an actor. He can easily get under the skin of the character he is playing, be it Lord Krishna or the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh." Last fortnight, with only hours of experience in office, Rama Rao was already behaving like quite an old hand at the game. The future of the Telugu Desam will depend squarely on Rama Rao's ability to 'play' the chief minister, not for three hours but for five years or more.

But, as Ramoji Rao, the chief editor of *Eenadu*, observed: "Chances are that Rama Rao will prove to be the strongest chief minister after Neelam Sanjiva Reddy." Corroborated Akkineni Nageswara Rao, a leading Telugu film star and Rama Rao's friend for 35 years: "I know my friend. He is sincere in everything that he does. He will make a good chief minister."

The Telugu Desam, though born only nine months ago, is not a ragtag army of neophytes. Though most of its members were attracted by Rama Rao's charisma, and some by his winning possibilities, they often left their trails in other political

N.T. RAMA RAO

"I Will Learn"

IT WAS truly an epic battle between Indira Gandhi's 97-year-old Congress Party and Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao's nine-month-old Telugu Desam. Rama Rao—popularly known as NTR or Anna, the Elder Brother—astounded the world by emerging the victor. The hero of 300-odd Telugu films, NTR was at the peak of his career when, all of a sudden, he launched the Telugu Desam party—meaning The Land of Telugus—in March last year to bring back the glory of the "3,000-year-old heritage of the Telugu

Rama Rao: restoring Telugu pride

people". The highest paid star in the Telugu film industry—unconfirmed reports say he used to charge a staggering Rs 20 lakh per film and act in a dozen films a year—Rama Rao gave up his lucrative career in films on May 29 last year as he entered his 60th year.

He took to politics, he said, to do something for the people of Andhra Pradesh who admired him and made him rich and famous during his 35-year film career by way of gratitude for all that they did for him. Wherever he went on tours during the past nine months, he drew unprecedented crowds.

Worried Congress(I) men took comfort by deluding themselves that his audiences flocked to him because his glamour. While opposition leaders dismissed him as "a man who suffers from an exaggerated opinion of himself", Mrs Gandhi herself ridiculed him by saying he is "a political actor". NTR's millions of admirers did not find all this was funny: they gave Mrs Gandhi and the opposition parties to state the drubbing of their lives by simply bundling them all out in the historic January 5 election.

The film star-turned-politician's amazing victory over a formidable leader with an international reputation like Mrs Gandhi has no precedent in world history. The blow is all the more painful for Mrs Gandhi and her son Rajiv because they took the election in the state—a Congress bastion since Independence—as a matter of personal prestige and undertook a relentless campaign by air force aircraft, helicopter and by road. The ramifications of her defeat at the hands of a film star virtually unknown outside his state are certainly a shattering blow to the prime minister. Only time will tell how it will affect her authority in the country and her image abroad.

In anticipation of Rama Rao's victory, INDIA TODAY's *Senior Editor* VENKAT NARAYAN *flew down to Hyderabad on the evening of the polling day. He established the crucial lead over all the other publications by meeting NTR at his residence on the morning of the counting day, 18 hours before it became known that Telugu Desam had attained an absolute majority.*

So confident was NTR about his imminent victory that he fielded questions with remarkable assurance and poise. The two-hour breakfast interview was punctuated by hot upma, idlis and jokes. Rama Rao, still hoarse after weeks of hectic compaigning, referred to what politicians had said about him and laughed the hurt away. Excerpts from the exclusive interview:

Q. *Your victory has come as a surprise to people outside Andhra Pradesh. People are asking: How can a man who is so new to politics defeat a centrally party like the Congress and a formidable leader like Indira Gandhi? How did you do it?*

A. The Congress has lost its

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man values. People are very unhappy with it. They feel they have been completely deceived. The party failed to fulfil what it promised to do. The Congress didn't stick to its principles either. Moreover, Congressmen have become addicted to all kinds of evils.

Q. *How does it feel to make history by defeating a veteran national personality like Mrs Gandhi?*

A. It is an event, like so many events in history. However popular leaders may be, when they are not conscious of their duties and fail to do things which they have been instalted to do, I'm afraid they'll have to go.

Q. *What are the factors that have contributed to your stunning victory?*

A. The Telugu people's dissatisfaction with the performance of the successive Congress(I) governments is the most important factor. The people of the state have realised that they were not happy. That's why they responded to my call.

Q. *Your victory seems to suggest that given a strong and well-meaning local leader in a state, it is not all that difficult to defeat Mrs Gandhi. You have proved it in Andhra Pradesh this time, M.G. Ramachandran has done it in Tamil Nadu, the late Sheikh Abdullah in Jammu and Kashmir and Jyoti Basu in West Bengal.*

A. Comparing what I have achieved this time with the others is not a fair proposition. They have been in politics long before they achieved success. I have done it in nine months. Moreover, a mere good leader is not enough. He must take up the burning issues in the state and articulate people's grievances and expectations. In such circumstances, ensuring Mrs Gandhi's defeat is a certain possibility.

Q. *Some observers of the Indian political scene say that by defeating her party in a state like Andhra Pradesh, which has been a Congress bastion since Independence, you have dealt a severe blow to Mrs Gandhi, so much so that this could mark the beginning of the end of the lady's political career.*

A. Only time will tell what will happen. Leaders should not forget what they have been voted for. Once a leader forgets about the welfare of the people, naturally it will have to be the end of that leader.

Q. *By voting you—a political novice—to power in preference to the Congress(I), what lesson do you think the Telugus were hoping to teach Mrs Gandhi?*

A. That you can't suppress their individuality and that when the occasion arises, they will not hesitate to hit back.

Q. *What were the notable mistakes Mrs Gandhi made while dealing with Andhra Pradesh affairs that made your victory rather easy?*

A. She hasn't kept her word. She's given so many slogans like Garibi Hatao and so many programmes like the 20-point programme and the five-point programme. But she hasn't implemented them.

Q. *Will your victory prove a morale-booster to the opposition parties? Will they get together to give Mrs Gandhi a tough fight in the next parliamentary election?*

A. Earlier, in 1977, this experiment was tried out and it succeeded. But they could not keep up with it. Such unity is possible if there's purposefulness and selflessness. It should be kept up till the end.

"Leaders should not forget what they have been voted for. Once a leader forgets about the welfare of the people, naturally it will have to be the end of that leader."

Q. *Do you think the people of India will accept Rajiv Gandhi as Mrs Gandhi's successor just because he happens to be her son?*

A. This country is not the personal property of any one family. The person who wants to rule it must prove his worth and get elected democratically.

Q. *What is your idea of an ideal government?*

A. Providing food, cloth and shelter to all the people.

Q. *Do you foresee any difficulties in getting funds from the Centre because you have subjected Mrs Gandhi to such a humiliating defeat?*

A. She's not giving funds from her own pocket, is she? I will not be asking the money for myself either. I represent six crore of people in my state, and whatever I may ask of her will be on their behalf. We are a part and parcel of the Indian republic. We must get our rightful share of the national cake.

Q. *What will be your attitude to the Centre?*

A. Very cooperative. We'll do our best to strengthen the Centre's hands and not weaken them as was claimed by the ruling party leaders during the election campaign. The Centre represents the whole country. We'll support it in all its national endeavours.

Q. *Women seem to have completely ignored Mrs Gandhi's call to help her "in an hour of distress" and voted for you in large numbers. What do you propose to do for them?*

A. The dowry system in our society is a big menace. It's an insult to our sisters that husbands have to be purchased for them through dowry. They must have equal rights with men and an equal share in property. We'll bring about relevant legislation.

Q. *You are new to the business of running a government. How do you plan to go about it?*

A. I'll learn. I have entered politics with no other motive except to bring about development. I'm confident everybody will cooperate with me.

Q. *What steps will you take to eliminate corruption?*

A. I'll be very strict with my partymen in this connection. Once people at the top are clean, the message will percolate to the bottom automatically.

Q. *What will you do if you find that one of your ministers or officers is corrupt?*

A. We'll expose such men before the people. That should make them feel ashamed of themselves. They will be given due punishment.

Q. *Mrs Gandhi has been condoning corruption by saying that it's a universal phenomenon.*

A. Condoning such evil is a most shameful thing. How can you defend an immoral thing saying it's a universal phenomenon? I'd never do a thing like that. Whenever an occasion arises, people will definitely show their disapproval of such things as it happened this time. That's how NTR came to stand against Indira Gandhi. People have voted for NTR so that he can root out all the evils the Congress(I) came to represent. By choosing me, people are asking for the restoration of moral values in public life.

Q. *How confident are you of delivering the goods?*

A. I have confidence in myself. I hope I can do it.

Q. *What is your message to people in other Congress(I)-ruled states?*

A. They must stand up and assert their democratic rights and should stop taking things lying down.

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parties. A large number of the Telugu Desam leaders had held important public offices, such as that of panchayat samiti president, at some stage. And, as the groundswell in favour of Rama Rao became obvious, professionals joined his party's ranks in droves.

Analysis: This is borne out by a hurriedly-done analysis of the 202-member Telugu Desam legislature party which

Bhaskara Rao, Srinivasulu Reddy and Mahendranath: premium on experience

reveals that their average age is 40 years and that there are 125 graduates, 28 holders of post-graduate degrees, several professionals like doctors, lawyers and engineers. The 15-member council of ministers includes seven law graduates and five other graduates. Five of the ministers had been samiti presidents earlier, one was a community leader, and one was a municipality chairman.

Significantly, the Rama Rao council of ministers includes four former Congress(I) MLA's, three of whom had been ministers in previous Congress regimes. After Rama Rao, the top three ministerial berths are held by former Congress(I) ministers such as: N. Bhaskara Rao, N. Srinivasulu Reddy and P. Mahendranath. Bhaskara Rao, Rama Rao's second-in-command in the Cabinet and finance minister, resigned last year after an unsuccessful bid to become the chief minister. Reddy was a minister in the Anjiah cabinet, and Mahendranath, prominent Harijan leader of the state, served in the earlier cabinets of Brahmananda Reddy, Narasimha Rao and Vengala Rao.

Only four people in the Rama Rao Ministry, including the chief minister, came in with no background in political activity. The ministry-making process itself showed that the premium was on experience in public work and understanding of the state's problems. No doubt there was an accent on youth, the average age of the ministers being 42, but the top layer comprised men of maturity and experience.

The party as such is an inchoate, amorphous mass of idealists, political innocents, or plain power-seekers. Many of them are just as starry-eyed as lithe and comely Tripurana Venkataratnam, 28, MLA from Vizianagaram district, who said: "We have promised to Anna (Rama Rao) that when the Assembly is not in session, we'd live in the constituencies. If we work hard and keep our promise, we can sweep all the 294 seats next time."

No political organisation can survive on popular enthusiasm alone and idealism, like everything else, is subject to the law of diminishing returns. As the heady euphoria of victory settles down, and Rama Rao confronts the harsh realities of the state, currently reeling under the effect of last autumn's stiff drought and consequent crop failure, he will find the necessity of building up a party organisation to sustain his appeal.

Fortunately for him, Rama Rao has a band of advisers around him who have so far stood him in good stead. Prominent among them are: P. Upendra, who had worked for Madhu Dandavate when he was the Union railway minister during the Janata government and had quit the Railway Ministry a few months ago; Y. Sekhar, a former chief reporter of *Eenadu*; and J. Chalameswara Rao, 30, a lawyer of Hyderabad. They assist Rama Rao in drafting speeches and formulating strategies.

KARNATAKA

The Debacle

IF THE Rama Rao victory in Andhra Pradesh was not entirely unexpected, the humbling of Congress(I) in neighbouring Karnataka took even the Opposition by surprise. Said Ramakrishna Hegde, 55, the new Janata Pa[illegible] minister: "Till a week before the [illegible] thought we would never make it. [illegible] sensed the change in the electorate [illegible] and knew that we had a good chance [illegible] victorious Janata-Ranga combine [illegible] conducted a low-key campaign, lack[illegible] Congress(I)'s funds and facilities, [illegible] a bolt from the blue.

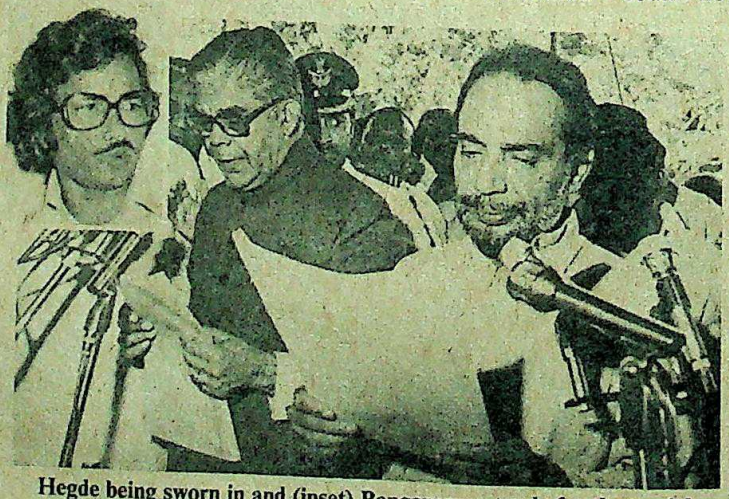
At one fell swoop the Ka[illegible] voter dislodged the once invincible [illegible] of Mrs Gandhi and gave the Janata [illegible] 95 seats in the 224-member A[illegible] leaving the Congress(I) trailing [illegible] With 14 out of 23 independe[illegible] the BJP, with its 18 members, e[illegible] support, the coalition was in the e[illegible] invincible position of having garne[illegible] MLA's on its side—20 more than [illegible] needed for an absolute majority.

The pummelling pushed the [illegible] ress(I) into a mood of introsp[illegible] "Nobody expected that the [illegible] ress(I) position would be like th[illegible] mitted defeated chief minister Gund[illegible] "I can't give any reasons. It's the p[illegible] verdict. Maybe they feel that a ch[illegible] necessary in the administration" [illegible] reluctance to be more forth com[illegible] understandable. But there was in [illegible] dearth of explanations.

Organisational Failure: A maj[illegible] tor was over-reliance on Mrs Ga[illegible] 'charisma' and the absence of a sol[illegible] organisation —two *ad hoc* presiden[illegible] appointed and Gundu Rao ste[illegible] his way over and around them. Th[illegible] was a lack of grass roots workers [illegible] mer minister who lost complained [illegible] "All that the party workers wan[illegible] money and drinks and then they [illegible] disappear."

Besides this, the lack of [illegible] support—with the Indian Union [illegible] League (IUML) going on its own be[illegible] could not reach an understandi[illegible] the Congress(I) for a [illegible] three seats—cost the [illegible] party dearly. So did t[illegible] mers' agitation in the m[illegible] tricts; although pooh-po[illegible] by Congressmen earlier [illegible] now admit it could ha[illegible] them at least 10 seats.

Party observer [illegible] Singh puts the blame s[illegible] on Gundu Rao's a[illegible] tration. Says he: "It [illegible] the policies and prog[illegible] of the party or Mrs G[illegible] image but the condu[illegible] style of the state adm[illegible] tion and opposition [illegible] which we did not con[illegible] swayed the el[illegible]



Hegde being sworn in and (inset) Bangarappa: tussle for the top job

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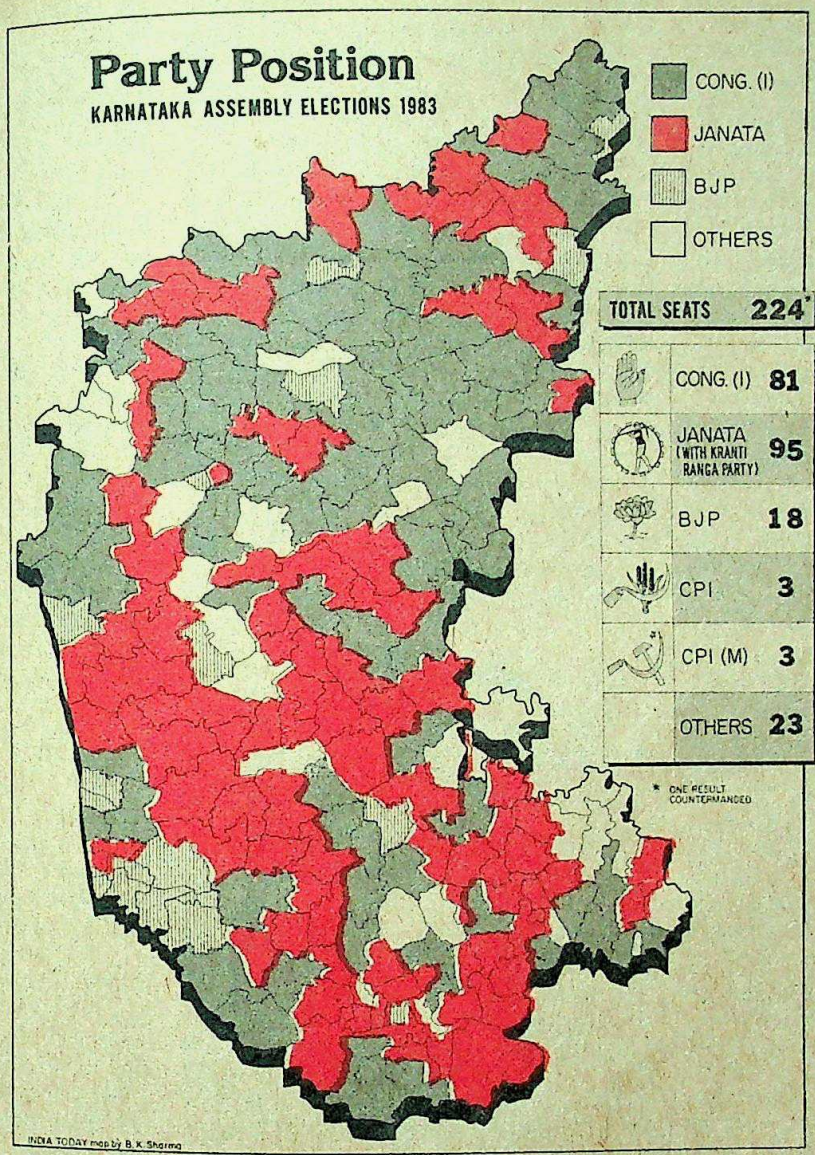

's words were echoed the Janata Party's B.A. who trounced ya, who trounced du Rao and said that image had been shed by the scandal- ministry. Said the rious Janata candi- "Rao's functioning his downfall."

The verdict caught the sition on the wrong and this was proved the subsequent leader- tussle. A three-day sion was held in e's house to sort out rs: Biju Patnaik who ly returned to the a Party flew in as ver followed by other a Party stalwarts, Shah and Era Sez- The key contenders the leadership were Bangarappa, Bommai H.D Deve Gowda. arappa was the natu- hoice but a large sec- in the Janata Party some of his own i Ranga colleagues would become un- llable if given the Deve Gowda and mai cannot get along each other. Hegde d himself as a com- se candidate if the was not resolved in r of the big three.

However, Banga- s hold over the 32 i Ranga MLA's was being eroded. Patnaik now made a r move: he casually mentioned to arappa that if he merged his party with nata he would have better chances of g the job. The Central Parliamentary of the Kranti Ranga immediately decision to merge. In the evening mai announced the merger to the press e Kranti Ranga President Nazir Sab d. When Nazir Sab entered, it was too refute Bommai.

Notable Absence: With the merger, arappa's threat of a walk-out was ted. The same night he agreed to e's becoming chief minister—but kept from the Ashok Hotel the next morn- when he was to meet Patnaik and e. He was also absent from the second ature party meeting to decide the rship issue. Chandraprabha Urs—the Devraj Urs's daughter—and Azeez Sait were sent to persuade him to come, but Bangarappa was adamant and did not even want his name to be considered for the chief minister's post if a secret ballot was held. Finally, the party appointed a five-member committee—Patnaik, Rachaiah, Nazir Sab, Viren Shah and the ageing S. Nijalingappa—to seek a consensus candidate.

The final list read Hegde, Bommai and Deve Gowda and naturally Hegde won. The newly-elected leader faced his first test almost immediately afterwards when, along with Patnaik and other leaders, he rushed to Bangarappa's house where a hostile crowd stopped them from entering the compound. Patnaik was manhandled and Deve Gowda came away with a torn shirt. Said an angry Patnaik: "If he uses such strong-arm methods I must revise my opinion of him." In the evening, however, Bangarappa addressed his followers outside his house and said that although he would support the Government he would not be part it. Hegde presented Governor Govind Narain with a list of his MLA's on January 9—*sans* Bangarappa's name.

Meanwhile, Congress(I) leaders K. Mallanna and Subbiah Shetty, hoping that Bangarappa would do something, met the governor and indicated that though they were not forming the Government, they insisted on physical verification of the candidates. Between then and noon the next day, the Congress(I) tried to win over a few independents, unsuccessfully. Hegde was finally given the nod by Narain on January 10.

Only an hour before Hegde was sworn in as Karnataka's 10th chief minister, a last-ditch effort was made in Hegde's house to placate Bangarappa. When he insisted on being made deputy chief minister, the new Cabinet—including his erstwhile Kranti Ranga colleagues—insisted that Bangarappa be made only a Cabinet minister with number-two minister status. A disgusted Bangarappa stalked out of the house and kept away from the swearing-in ceremony.

Power Tactics: The Congress(I) had watched the Janata leadership imbroglio with glee and efforts were made to woo the independents—and Bangarappa, who at one time was reportedly asked to join the party and offered the carrot of the chief minister's post. Although Gundu Rao, immediately after the defeat, had announced that his party would sit in the Opposition, Buta Singh—seemingly a permanent fixture in Bangalore—initially made statements indicating that his party would form the Government.

But ultimately the Congress(I) thought it strategically wiser to allow Hegde the chair; with his wafer-thin majority, the Congress(I) probably felt he would make no headway and could be toppled with ease. As Gundu Rao said: "The Janata Party will find it difficult to run a stable government; with their thin majority they have to take care of MLA's and oblige so many people. Ours was a limited company. Theirs will be an unlimited drama troupe. It will

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TRIPURA

Limping Home

THE VICTORY of the Left Front in Tripura at the assembly polls last fortnight came as no surprise. But after the swearing-in ceremony of the 12-member Tripura council of ministers, headed by 76-year-old Nripen Chakrabarty, an uneasy calm prevailed. With 37 seats in hand, the Marxists are faced with a truncated share in the 60-member Assembly and cope with a much more vocal opposition of 21 compared to only four in the previous House, which had no representation from the Congress(I). The Congress(I) this time has secured an amazing 12 seats, with the possibility of two rebel candidates returning to the fold. The Congress(I) should keep the Left Front on its toes. Another blow for the Marxists' came from Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) which not only retained its four seats but added another two to it.

Although the Marxists, till now, have administered the state with a fair degree of moderation, the fact that they couldn't muster a two-third majority, falling short of just one seat, is a pointer to future developments. The reason for this seems chiefly to be rising antagonism between the tribals and the Bengali-speaking population of the state. The tribals feel that they are not getting a fair share of the jobs and the Bengali-speaking people dominate the leadership of the state's politics.

In the new Assembly, the Left Front consists of two parties—the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), which bagged both seats allotted to it. The lone Forward Bloc candidate lost the Bardawli seat to the Congress(I) President Ashok Bhattacharya and the CPI, a later entrant to the Front, lost the Blonia seat to rebel Congress(I) candidate Manoranjan Mazumdar.

Failure: Where the Left Front failed to secure seats was in the Amarpur subdivision. Out of the three seats there, Ompinagar and Raima Valley went to the TUJS and the Birganj seats to the Congress(I) rebel candidate. Even since the Mandai riots in June 1980, Amarpur has been a hot-bed of tribal extremist activities.

Yet another set-back for the Left Front is the entry into the state's parliamentary politics of an organisation called "Amra Bangali", which grew largely after the Mandai riots (INDIA TODAY, July 1-15, 1980) and seeks to thrive on Bengali chauvinism. Although it has secured just one seat, the trend is disturbing for the Front. Even in Nripen Chakrabarty's constituency of Promodnagar, his nearest rival does not belong to the Congress(I) but to Amra Bangali. While it is possible that inside the legislature the TUJS and Amra Bangali will be at loggerheads with each other, that is going to be of little comfort to the Marxists as the battle within is bound to lead to tribal-Bengali estrangement outside. Apart from this the Left Front will come up against numerous hurdles if the Congress(I) encourages, through its alliance with the TUJS, any separatist trend among the tribals

While the Congress(I) was celebrating its impressive seizures of seats in the Marxist bastion, the intense rivalry

Chakrabarty: holding the fort

between Ashok Bhattacharya and former chief minister Sukhamoy Sengupta, both of whom have won, continued to be manifest in the fact that each stayed away from the other and seemed to celebrate not the party's gains but their individual success. Informed sources in Agartala claimed that the quarrel between the two will intensify on the issue of who should become the leader of the Opposition.

For the Marxists, the comforting fact is that though they have lost 15 seats they could ensure the return of all the ministers, save two. Meanwhile, the most overriding fact remains that the people of Tripura voted according to what they experienced and not what they were asked to believe. As a journalist in Agartala pointed out: "For the first time the people of Tripura saw a government which was trying to do something for them and the state and they decided it should continue."

—SUMANTA SEN

be difficult for them to provide an and clean government. So let us watch."

The Janata Party steered thro shoals of the leadership issue with ted speed, but the Bangarappa fac gnaw at Hegde's mind. And the at the mercy of the BJP and the indep

Policy Shaping: Despite the future Chief Minister Hegde got business within hours of his sweari man of considerable administrat political experience—he was MLA 1957 as a Congress representative, ministries till 1971 when he left Gandhi's party, a Janata Party Raj member and the party's secretary—Hegde in a move clearly towards the extravagant style of Rao, declared that ministers would imported cars or attend any fe functions. Significantly, Hegde said most priority would be the farmers and unemployment. He also par sensitive language issue by toeing R that priority would be given to Ka made it clear that there would be frontation with the Central Gover warned that if they were given motherly" treatment they would their rights. Said Hegde: "I feel the placed a tremendous responsibility The task before me is by no means the people's expectation is high. Bui possible to promote a stable gover

But Bangarappa's presence, o absence loomed large. As it is, the Ja to contend with its own past when strength of 59 Assembly members tled by defections to a paltry 12 in 1 leadership selected candidates very this time round but their 'Congress has made it uneasy. Besides this Party leaders fear that Bangarapp rally the backward classes agai Government. He has reportedly got with Kannada matinee idol Raj K close friend, who has not so far politics but could be lured into it Rao's success. If they combine th prove a major threat for both the Party and the Congress(I).

MRS GANDHI

Future Shock

THE SOUTHERN "de carried with it a numbing problems. As the reverber the Andhra and Karnataka polls and the din of elections in Delhi and Meghalaya becomes more au Congress(I) is caught in a pince need to take stock of its recent

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before it can do so, prepare for yet her electoral battle.

The most ominous of these problems e deep dent inflicted by the Karnataka Andhra Pradesh voter in Mrs dhi's credibility and her personal sma. The most crucial lesson of the ons is that people are no longer re- to take Mrs Gandhi at her word. e there was a confidence, a blind faith in a leader who—with the exception e 1977 Lok Sabha election—somehow aged always to come out on top.

all that, for the moment at least, like a lost dimension. The collapse esmerising, and it will be a Herculean for her to regain her credibility at the ngs, just as it will now be all the difficult for her to battle the growing dence in Congress(I) ranks. Within of the debacle, dissidence in arashtra rekindled the anti-Bhosale paign, and at fortnight's end a trickle of dissident ministers leaving the ale Cabinet. In Bihar preparations were for a new signature campaign against f Minister Jagannath Mishra while se- Gujarat MP's began counselling the command that the Congressmen who broken away from the party a month and formed a new Rashtriya Congress page 55) should be wooed back.

Diverse moves such as these were d by a common thread. What the gress(I) dissidents were clamouring for was not just a removal of sitting chief sters but their replacement by persons their own choice. No longer were dissidents in a mood to accept nces from New Delhi, a mood ge engendered by the January oral drubbing.

Mrs Gandhi's elbow-room in coping such tensions, never very amenable to ol even at the best of times, was se- y limited by the complete absence of rty organisation within which they d be worked out. Not only is there no alsation worth the name, there isn't any alternative line-up of leadership an be picked or even groomed to ce the current crop of state-level tionaries.

With no effective party team to back up either with political or personal port, her chief confidant today is a cal novice—her son Rajiv—who has d to win his spurs in the tumultuous a of national politics. Ill-suited for the to begin with, in the last 18 months y has gained experience at little more organised public speaking and behind scenes, private intervention into party s. His own team of advisors are not chosen because they have experience of the political market-place, but achievers in a wholly different field, people good at managing companies but strikingly out of place when it came to dealing with the complex strands, pressures and dictates of politics.

Reshuffling Ranks: Overnight this new coterie has sought to seize the reins of the party from the hands of the rumbustious storm-troopers who had moved into the party at the instance of the late Sanjay Gandhi. Mrs Gandhi cannot do away with Sanjay's painful legacy nor has she in her hands a new viable blueprint drawn up by Rajiv.

Mrs Gandhh's track record shows that though she has in the past bounced back from crippling adversity, she has not been able to retrieve ground lost to regional forces. Her reprieve in the early '70s in West Bengal proved short-lived: when she lost the state to the Marxists in 1977, she probably lost it for a generation. Jammu and Kashmir was sacrificed to the National Conference for political expediency, but the Congress(I) has no hope at all of regaining Tamil Nadu.

Mrs Gandhi cannot do away with Sanjay's painful legacy nor has she in her hands a new viable blueprint drawn up by Rajiv

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

In good part, it is her work style that centralised power. During the balmy days of Jawaharlal Nehru, India had a leader who encouraged regional leaders, kept them in the fold of the Congress Party and thereby kept a check on regional divisiveness. Mrs Gandhi, who in 1967–69 clashed headlong with similar regional kingmakers, coped with her problems by cutting away anyone who had an independent power base or could even remotely threaten her. But in losing competitors she also lost men and women who could independently help her. Today, she is surrounded by small men among whom she towers all too tall. And the regional sentiments that have inexorably swelled in the intervening years has thrown up outsiders—the Kamarajs and B.C. Roys of yesteryear have been replaced by the M.G. Ramachandrans and N.T. Rama Raos—and the trend is all too clear.

The writing is on the wall. Mrs Gandhi can survive as a symbol of national unity only if she can provide the effective, working government that this country is crying for. That means several things for which it may already be too late. It means an induction of men and women of proven talent into positions of leadership and executive decision-making who will replace the faceless minions who have come to slouch on chief ministers' *gaddis* and ministerial perches. It means a radical departure from accepting a slothful party, a party whose fortunes turn on the rise and fall of one person and her sibling. It means giving full play to democratic forces within the Congress(I), rebuilding an organisation shattered by self-seekers and political fixers, and creating a cadre which is not only in touch with the grass roots but has a sense of purpose.

And, it means bold decisions, to name names, eliminate deadwood, and slough off the old skin as she once did in 1969. Only Mrs Gandhi, who has to reach once again for the instincts that stood by her a decade ago, can decide the practical mechanics of this. But it is time for bold action, whether in calling a mid-term election or eliminating political non-entities. Otherwise the litany of electoral losses will soon become a dirge. It will be an inapposite fate for a party which celebrates its centenary and faces its most crucial electoral test in 1985.

—S. VENKAT NARAYAN, SUMIT MITRA, PRABHU CHAWLA and RAJ CHENGAPPA

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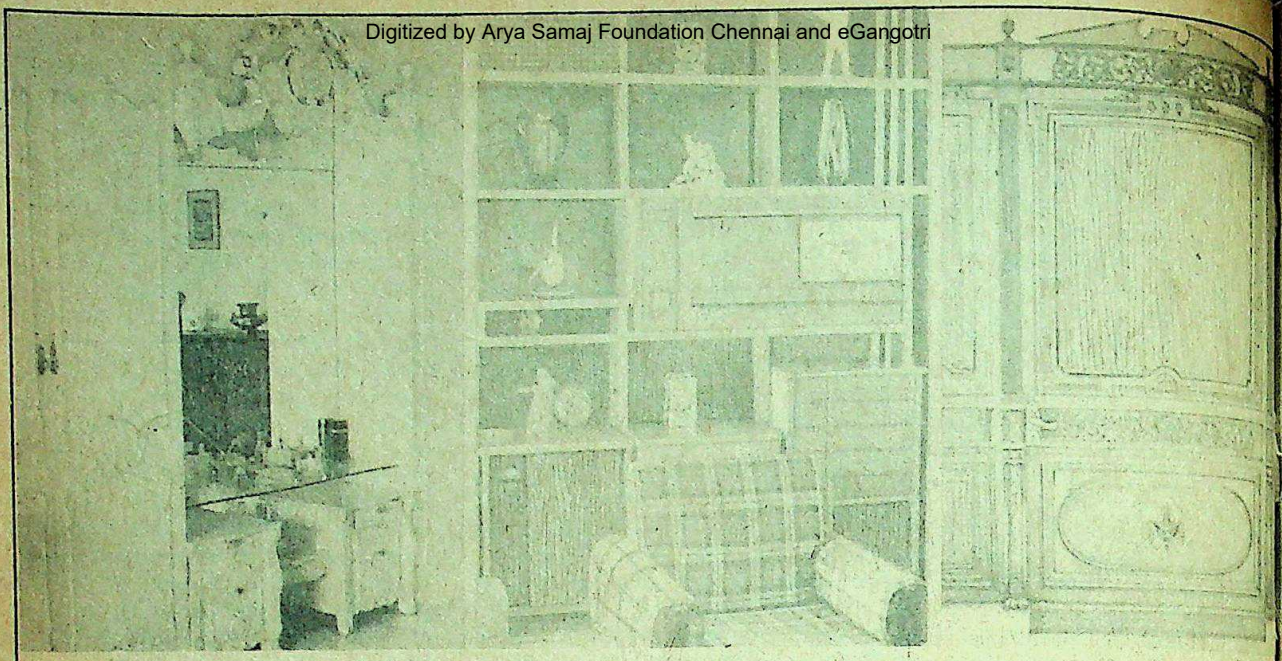

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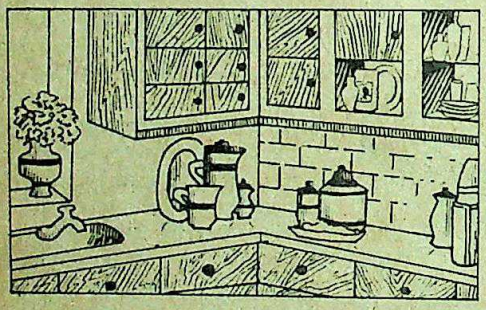

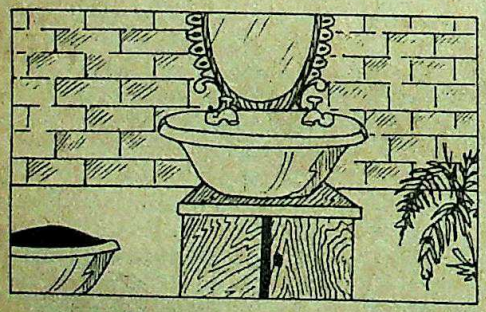

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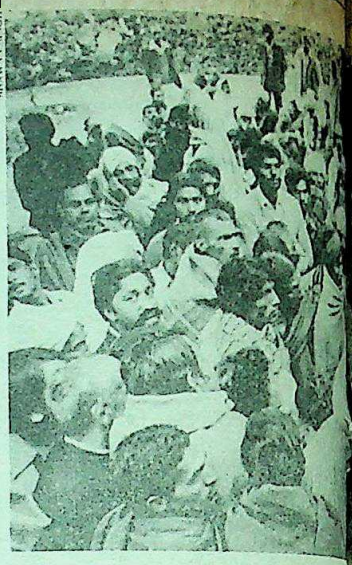

Vajpayee addressing BJP workers (left) and Congress(I) workers at the party head quarter: grim battle

DELHI

And Now, The Reckoning

IT WAS three years too long in the coming. But when last fortnight the Government announced municipal elections in Delhi for February 5, it seemed at first that the Congress(I) could not have timed it better. The party was riding high on the success of the Asian Games and all six of Delhi's Congress(I) MP's had advised Mrs Gandhi that the political climate could not be more favourable. All this, of course, was before the Congress(I)'s stunning defeat in the south. And in a space of four days the rising confidence of the Congress(I) was shattered and the morale of the Opposition received its biggest boost.

The plans for the elections had obviously been laid carefully. According to informed sources within the Congress(I) the decision was taken by the high command on December 14 and Mrs Gandhi instructed the Home Ministry to inform the Election Commission about the Central Government's willingness to go to the polls before leaving for her election tours. Another sign came on January 2 when President Zail Singh issued an ordinance amending both the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act and Delhi Administration Act to avoid the revision of the electoral rolls to include those who became 21 years old on or before January 1, 1983.

This proved quite conclusively that the matter had been given careful consideration. According to the original schedule the elections to the 56-member Metropolitan Council (MC) and the 100-member Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) were to be held on February 20. The date was advanced, it is believed, to free the city administration and the police force for the non-aligned meet in March.

Popular Mandate: For the Congress(I), this election was supposed to give their *de facto* rule of the city a popular mandate. Ever since the Central Government superseded the Janata-dominated MC and MCD on the grounds of inefficiency and maladministration, the party has tried to consolidate a power base. And the decision to hold the elections now proved that the ruling party felt sure of the 33 lakh electorate. Said H.K.L. Bhagat, Union minister for works and housing and Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee(I) president: "We are proud of our achievements during the last three years. Besides the Asian Games, we have ensured uninterrupted supply of essential commodities, improvement in the law and order situation, effective implementation of prime minister's 20-point programme, resettlement colonies. Delhi looks better than what the Janata Party left for us."

Optimism was equally evident. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came had 40 members in the MC and 4 MCD in 1980 and will prove the challenge to the Congress(I). Before ary 5, they had already had 40,000 seekers. After the news of the gress(I) rout in the south broke numbers swelled to over 50,000. jubilant Vijay Kumar Malhotra, of the BJP's Delhi unit: "Our emphasis on positive aspects. The people know our rule in the past and know

Bhagat, Malhotra and Kishore Lal: girding for the fray

BJP can run ... ency. And we ... Aware of th ... is and strateg ... ed to fight t ... nd. 'Referring ... ns about the A ... Madan Lal ... a sports succes ... scandal as ... on many ur ... d like to scrut ... carefully." E ... paign extensive ... s to prove that ... lly because ... on in the BJP ... President Ata ... hopes that V ... skills will swing ... Apart from th ... other issues th ... on are the w ... tion, the hum ... by senior Co ... unbalanced ... king on one is ... unit President ... es by the n ... Delhi has bec ... nal tribe. Eve ... to power, o ... us crimes have ... Unity Moves: ... s that the elec ... est between th ... (I). Recognising ... non foe there ... es: one betwee ... C) and the ot ... st Party of In ... Party of Indi ... Dal (K), H.N.

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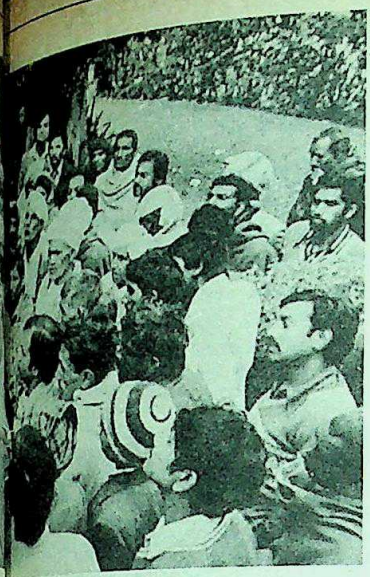

BJP can run Delhi with dignity and ...ency. And we will prove it again."

Aware of the Congress(I)'s main ...ks and strategies, the BJP seems deter...ed to fight the party on its own ...nd. Referring to the Congress(I)'s ...ns about the Asiad, BJP General Secre... Madan Lal Khurana said: "Asiad ...a sports success but it is a monumen... scandal as they have squandered ...y on many unwanted projects. People ...d like to scrutinise the Asiad expenses ...e carefully." Expecting Mrs Gandhi to ...paign extensively in the city, the BJP ...s to prove that Delhi has suffered spe...ally because of her rule. The other ...pon in the BJP arsenal is the charisma ...s President Atal Behari Vajpayee. The ...y hopes that Vajpayee with his orato...skills will swing borderline votes.

Apart from the growth of corruption, ...other issues that the Opposition will ... on are the worsening law and order ...tion, the humiliation of the bureau... by senior Congress(I) members and ... unbalanced development of Delhi. ...king on one issue, the Janata Party's ...unit President Kishore Lal said: "If ... Delhi has become quite safe for the ...inal tribe. Ever since the Congress(I) ... to power, over 50 per cent of the ...ous crimes have not been solved."

Unity Moves: What has emerged so ...s that the elections will be a straight ...est between the BJP and the Cong...(I). Recognising the Congress(I) as the ...mon foe there have been two al...ces; one between the BJP and the Lok ...C) and the other between the Com...st Party of India (CPI), the Commu...Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), the ...Dal (K), H.N. Bahuguna's Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and Jagjivan Ram's Congress(J).

On January 10 the BJP conceded nine of the 100 MCD seats and six of the 56 MC seats to the Lok Dal(C). Just before the nominations were filed other electoral adjustments were hurriedly arrived at. Then CPI, CPI-M, the Lok Dal(K) and the DSP decided to band together with the Akali Dal (Longowal) supporting them. The Tara Singh faction went along with the Congress(I). With Muslims and Sikhs holding the balance on over 24 MC and MCD seats, Lal exulted: "With public declarations of Sikhs and some Muslim groups to vote against both the BJP and the Congress(I), our poll prospects have brightened."

The BJP, however, looks at the situation from a very different angle. Their thinking is that three-cornered contests would help the party. In Harijan-dominated east Delhi and the resettlement constituencies, a CPI, CPI-M or Congress(J) candidate will, it is felt, cut into the Congress(I) vote. The situation is the same with the Sikh and Muslim vote. Both these communities, though unwilling to vote for the BJP will nevertheless help it by choosing either an Akali candidate or one backed by the DSP because of their disenchantment with the ruling party.

Populist Ploys: The Congress(I), however, is not entirely dependent on its campaign machine to woo voters. Just before the announcement of the election the Central Government regularised over 400 unauthorised colonies with a combined population of over 10 lakh. The government also sanctioned more than Rs 15 crore for the improvement of slums in Old Delhi, allowed private house owners to add a third storey, permitted the resale of Delhi Development Authority (DDA) flats and plots before the expiry of the 10-year limit, announced the new pay scales for 6,000 DDA employees and promised accommodation to all the commercial squatters on public land.

The vote-catching devices were more than necessary. The Delhi unit of the party is hopelessly split by factionalism and the lack of a strong local leadership. The three main warring groups are headed by Bhagat who has a following among the Punjabis, Delhi Pradesh Youth Congress(I) President Jagdish Tytler who has carved a niche with the youth and labour, and MP Dharam Dass Shastri leading the Harijans. Another impediment is the strained relationship between Bhagat and Delhi's powerful Lt-Governor Jagmohan. With the electoral debacle of the Congress(I) in the south still fresh in the public mind, prospects for this divided house seem to be dim.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

ASSAM

Pressure Tactics

IT IS the most daunting challenge that the Government has ever taken up: to hold elections in a state convulsed for more than four years by an anti-'foreigners' agitation, where leaders claiming the support of the Assamese majority have made it clear with the use of bandhs and strikes that they will not allow elections to be held until the issue is resolved. Last fortnight, however, in what seemed to political observers a foolhardy decision, the Centre decided to hold elections to the state's 126-member Assembly and 12 Lok Sabha seats, over three days starting February 14.

The announcement came hard on the heels of the by now inevitable break-down in talks and agitation leaders lost no time in warning that they would not allow Assam to go to the polls. But the Government, too, was not letting the grass grow under its feet. When the agitation leaders returned to Gauhati, they were promptly rounded up under the National Security Act; the detained included All Assam Students Union (AASU) President Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, AASU General Secretary Bhrigu Kumar Phukan, and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) convenors Joynath Sarma and Naren Tanti.

Severe Measures: The Government took further draconian measures under the Assam Special Powers (Press) Act, clamping curbs on the *Assam Tribune* and *Dainik Asom* for two months—both papers are sympathetic to the agitation. At the same time, the authorities despatched 15 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) battalions to the state—Assam already had 20 CRPF battalions when the announcement came. Even with this massive force, polling is scheduled over three days so as not to spread the force too thin. The CRPF men appear to be a little jittery—six jawans raided the UNI office at Uzanbazar in Gauhati on January 10 and beat up a teleprinter operator.

The people have not taken at all kindly to this display of muscle. The growing resentment of bureaucratic high-handedness found spontaneous expression in the various bandhs that were organised in different parts of the state, including a 24-hour bandh in Gauhati itself. Meanwhile, some aspiring candidates were gheraoed in

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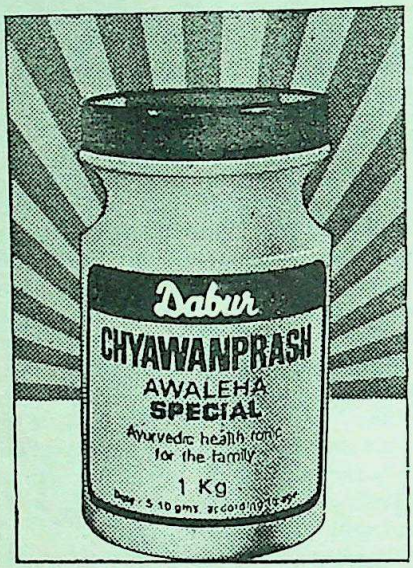
What is the secret of amla? What was the "elixir of life"?

Startling facts about the world's best known ayurvedic tonic

Dabur Chyawanprash



The elixir of life

Chyawanprash literally means "food for Chyawan Rishi". The legend goes that Chyawanprash was first created 3,000 years ago as a health food by the physicians of the Gods.

So amazing were its powers, that the rishis often called it "Jeevan" or "the elixir of life".

The rishis believed that it not only built up resistance and kept body tissues young...it also kept the mind alert and active.

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It was the early ayurveds who first discovered that amla is nature's best defence against illness. It is the richest known source of natural Vitamin C. In fact, amla juice contains 20 times more Vitamin C than orange juice!

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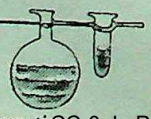

For years people felt that all Vitamin C did was prevent colds.

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DR. ASHOK MAJUMDAR, RENOWNED AYURVEDIC EXPERT SAYS:

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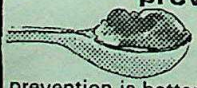
Dabur Chyawanprash is manufactured in fully-automated plants by the world's largest manufacturers of ayurvedic products.

Dabur Chyawanprash your daily ounce of prevention



Ayurveda has always believed that prevention is better than cure. By building up the body's natural resistance to infection, Dabur Chyawanprash helps to keep your family healthy.

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uhati and Jorhat and small batches of ople took out processions in protest ainst the decision to hold the elections.

Even political parties opposed to the tation found it difficult to condone the asures. Said the spokesman of one rty: "It is a strange situation. On the e hand, the Government is trying to set e democratic process in motion and on e other, it is curbing civil rights." One ior government official countered: ow else could we deal with people who d openly threatened to disrupt the elec- ns?" As for the curbs on the two dai- s, the administration explained that it not wish publication of material which uld disrupt the peace before the elec- ns. According to one official estimate, re could be a fair amount of trouble in constituencies in the districts of Kam- p, Nowgong and Darrange.

Poll Boycott: The political parties e barely a month to prepare for the ls. The Janata Party, the Bharatiya ata Party (BJP) and the two Lok Dals demned the decision and announced t they would boycott the polls. The BJP e executive, in a resolution, expressed "surprise and dismay" at the proposal hold elections on the basis of the 1979 toral rolls which, it said, contained a e number of "foreigners' names". It her said that "holding of elections with updated electoral rolls will not only unconstitutional and illegal, but also cut at the very roots of democracy". However, the Representation of the People's Act does provide that the rolls may not be revised, if prevailing conditions do not allow the authorities to do so—and the Election Commission said it had little time for even a summary revision.

With the major national opposition parties out of the fray, that left the faction-ridden Congress(I) and the left democratic alliance—Congress(S), the two communist parties and the smaller leftist groups—facing each other. The leftist alliance—which in 1980 was denied an opportunity to form the ministry by Governor Prakash Mehrotra when it had 62 members in an effective house of 117—is ready for the elections which its constituents had been demanding for quite some time. The communists, particularly, have carried on with their grass roots work throughout the period of turmoil. Similarly, as opposed to the Congress(I), the other Congress is much more cohesive under leaders like Sarat Sinha and Dev Kant Barooah.

This time round, the smooth conduct of the elections will depend a lot on state government employees who are yet to retract from their stand that they would not cooperate with the Government if an election were held without a solution to the 'foreigners' issue. The Government was reportedly thinking of bringing people from outside to man the booths—in all, 16,000 people would be required.

But the Government is determined to have its way. Last fortnight it was offering police protection to any candidate who felt he needed it. As for the Congress(I), after the thrashing in the deep south, it is not likely to leave any stone unturned to grab power in Assam, just as it did in Nagaland where it literally bought its way to power. However, for both the ruling party and the administration, the February elections could turn out to be a classic case of biting off more than they can chew.

—SUMANTA SEN in Gauhati

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

A plaque installed by the AASU at Gauhati University saying 'Victory to mother Assam'

Ends Of Justice

SO HAM-HANDED and desperate for representatives of any stature in Assam has the Congress(I) become that it has jettisoned all concern for decorum and dignity in the loftiest institution of the land, the Supreme Court. Exactly four weeks after he delivered a judgment that granted Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra a reprieve from trial for forgery and criminal misconduct, Justice Baharul Islam tendered his resignation from the Bench to President Zail Singh.

Baharul Islam

Coming as it did on January 13, six weeks before he was due in any case to retire from his judgeship, Islam's action detonated intense controversy in legal circles. "After I retired from the Gauhati High Court in March 1980," Islam told INDIA TODAY, "I had spent some months trying to help solve the Assam crisis. Today I feel Assam is in a difficult situation, and my services are more necessary for the people of Assam."

There were significances galore in Islam's move. He was an Indira Gandhi Government appointee to the Supreme Court in December 1980, nine months after his retirement from the Gauhati bench. For 10 years from April 1962, he had been a Congress member of the Rajya Sabha. The last date for filing nominations for the Assam Assembly elections is January 19, and Islam said he would be in Gauhati "within the week" although he refused to say if he was standing for election. Sources, however, indicate that he may even be put up for the chief ministership if he stands and wins. Islam believes all communities in Assam ought to live together in peace; "It is impossible to deport all the foreigners," he says, "and nor will the elections be peaceful. I know where my duty lies. I am a staunch believer in the Bhagavad Gita."

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

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AKALI TALKS

A Fragile Truce

THE WAR of attrition in Punjab continues. Coming together to break a nine-month-old impasse, moderate and extremist Akalis met a high-power Central delegation consisting of Home Minister P.C. Sethi, Defence Minister R. Venkataraman, Petroleum Minister P. Shiv Shankar and Home Secretary T.N. Chaturvedi in Chandigarh last fortnight. The beginning of formal talks marked an end to the Akali decision to stay away from the negotiation table after their clarificatory sessions with former Union minister Swaran Singh which ended on November 18. While the day-long deliberations amidst tight security arrangements were inconclusive, Sethi affirmed: "We have understood each other better."

Informed sources disclosed that the current talks had focussed primarily on the religious demands already accepted in principle by the Centre. Among them were an all India gurudwara act to be drafted after eliciting the opinions of various Sikh sects. While the Akalis want to centralise the management of historic gurudwaras all over India, and confer the right to vote only on the Amritdhari sect, the Government has continued to uphold the claims to franchise of other sects such as the Sehjdharis, the Nirmalas and the Nanakpanthis. The Government agreed that the time of the relay *gurbani* broadcast from the Golden Temple in the early hours of the morning would be increased but continued to oppose the installation of a powerful transmitter. Meanwhile, the Punjab Government has taken steps to declare the walled area of Amritsar as holy and banish meat and tobacco sellers.

Although the afternoon session was partially devoted to political, territorial and river water issues, they are likely to be taken up again in forthcoming discussions. However, the mediation efforts which preceded the talks have indicated the current shape of the consensus on these. The Chandigarh issue has, by far, remained the only insoluble one. While Punjab Chief Minister Darbara Singh has continued to press his claim, also in the air was a proposal by Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee-I (PPCC-I) leader Hansraj Sharma to divide the capital in a 60:40 ratio between Punjab and Haryana.

Of the villages of Abohar and Fazilka tehsils of Ferozepur which were to go to Haryana under the prime minister's 1970 accord, only the Hindi-speaking areas numbering less than 30 are likely to be affected. Some villages in Patiala and Sirsa districts, of Punjab and Haryana respectively, might also be exchanged in accordance with linguistic and contiguity principles. This will be done without involving any linguistic commission or all-party committee. Meanwhile, the issue of allocating surplus waters of the rivers Ravi and Beas would, in keeping with Akali demands, be referred to a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court. In addition, a committee of experts would probably examine the thorny problem of restructuring Centre-state relations, though not along the lines of the Anandpur Sahib resolution. This claims all portfolios for the state apart from defence, currency, communication and foreign affairs. The demand for the release of arrested Akali activists, an important basis for garnering the support of the militant Sant Bhindranwale on the eve of the talks, was also being considered.

Hard Pressed: After her southern debacle, Mrs Gandhi is hard pressed to woo Sikh voters, who constitute 15 per cent of the Delhi electorate which goes to the polls on February 5. Hence Home Minister Sethi's one-page invitation to the Akali leadership on January 6. Her earnestness was evident in the remarks she reportedly made to the leader of the Akali Dal (Tara Singh group) Rachhpal Singh in Delhi. Singh quoted her as saying: "I want to thrash out all the demands; there is no problem in meeting the religious demands." Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal's pliancy at a meeting with Rajiv Gandhi where he offered to support a Central solution, and Chief Minister Darbara Singh's current optimism have all to be viewed in this light.

On the other hand, the growing agitation of the Akalis in an increasingly violent dispute which threatens to divide Punjab along communal lines, has been moderates like former Akali chief minister Prakash Singh Badal in swinging the way accepting the invitation. Fatigued by the long morcha which saw 40,000 supporters arrested, the Akalis realised that their incipitous threat to quit assembly and parliamentary seats on Republic Day, would take them to a point of no return. Said Badal: "Although we are [illegible] tired of sending *jathas* to jail every only a reasonable solution can [illegible] from taking recourse to adventurous [illegible]

Accepting the olive branch after night consultations at Teja Singh Samudri Hall in Amritsar on January [illegible] Akalis have made a strong bid for [illegible]sion. Said the morcha leader and [illegible] Dal chief Sant Harchand Singh Longowal: "We are making a positive bid for a [illegible]tion now." With even the ailing Bhindranwale behind them, the Akalis [illegible]ged to put together a team ranging [illegible] moderates like Badal, former Punjab [illegible]nance minister Balwant Singh, [illegible] Punjab Assembly speaker Ravi [illegible] Singh, former Union minister Surjit [illegible] Barnala, and Shiromani Gurudwara [illegible]bandhak Committee President Gurcharan Singh Tohra, to pro-Khalistan extremists like Jagdev Singh Talwandi, MP, and Sukhjinder Singh, MLA. Said the [illegible] talking Longowal: "Discordant voices everywhere, but we are certainly [illegible] united than Mrs Gandhi's party is."

Since the last week of Dec[illegible]

PICTURES BY D.P. SHARDA

The Central Government team and (right) the Akali delegation: breaking the impasse

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However, the atmosphere in the city of Amritsar has been charged with recriminations. On December 23, a representative gathering of ex-servicemen had demonstrated in favour of the Akali demands. And on January 9, pro-Akali intellectuals gathered in large numbers to voice a score of accusations, charging the Centre with discrimination against the Sikhs.

Volatile Situations: Also on January 9, a smaller gathering near the Durgiana Mandir was equally choleric in its attack. The Rashtriya Suraksha Samiti, an organisation of Hindu extremists, wanted a commission to find out whether it was not the Hindus who were discriminated against.

The continuing volatility of the situation is clear. While Bhindranwale recently embarrassed the Akali leadership by openly extending support to the self-styled president of Khalistan, Dr Jagjit Singh, bomb blasts in the state were reminders of the fragile peace. Reverting to his earlier intransigence at a hurriedly summoned press conference while the talks were still going on, Bhajan Lal denied that Sethi had asked him to reconsider his stand.

As the January 26 deadline and the Delhi elections scheduled for February 5 draw nearer, the tense search for a compromise formula is ever present. A second meeting in the third week of January is to be expected. Sustaining pressure on the Centre, Longowal has announced that the peaceful morcha will continue until all the demands have been met. Senior Akali leaders have also deferred a decision on Akali support in the Delhi elections. Said the moderate Badal, emphasising the tortuous course ahead, "How do you expect our 34-year-old grievances to be solved in a two-hour meeting?" —GOBIND THUKRAL

PPSC

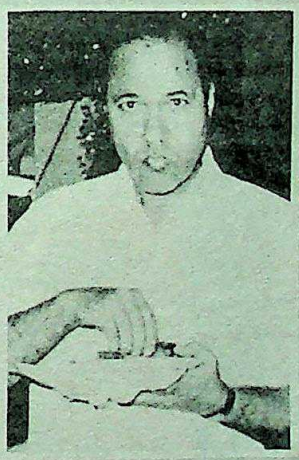
Ringing Blow

IT WAS a blow that echoed through Punjab's corridors of power. After Mrs Santosh Chaudhry, chairman of the Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC), was slapped by commission member Krishan Gopal Saini in the PPSC building in Patiala's Baradari Gardens on November 24, the shocked authorities managed to keep it out of the papers for almost a month. However, a Chandigarh paper boxed the story on its front page last month blowing the lid off what is possibly the first incident of its unsavoury kind in the country.

The assault on Chaudhry, 42, reportedly took place when, after an exhausting round of interviews, the chairman and the four PPSC members were walking towards their rooms. Chaudhry, according to reports, asked Saini, 52, to inform the office whenever he could not attend the interviews. She reportedly admonished him for not doing so—which provoked Saini to slap her. Said PPSC member Major-General Mohinder Singh Brar: "We had no words to console her with. We felt equally hurt: that a member of this august body could stoop so low as to physically assault the chairman and that too a lady." Added Professor Harbhajan Singh Deol: "I asked Saini to apologise but he said that she should be treated only like this." The third PPSC member, W.B. Lall, said: "What was puzzling was that there was no provocation from Mrs Chaudhry and, what is more, the man would just not say 'sorry'."

Chaudhry herself would only say: "I thought it was some bad dream. But the agony of being hit was real and too painful for tears." Later, she and the other members rushed with a memorandum to Punjab Governor Dr M. Chenna Reddy who was, however, away in Hyderabad. They met Chief Minister Darbara Singh and Chief Secretary K.D. Vasudeva, who described the incident as "appalling". Said the chief minister: "It has certainly lowered the prestige of Punjab." Afterwards, Chaudhry spoke to Reddy on the phone; the governor directed Vasudeva to send a report to the Union Home Ministry.

Chaudhry, meanwhile, went with her tale of woe to Mrs Gandhi. The PPSC chairman has the right connections: her father Roshan Lal is a Rajya Sabha member from Himachal Pradesh and father-in-law Sunder Singh, a Harijan leader, is a Lok Sabha MP from Punjab and sat in the Punjab Assembly from 1957 to 1980. Mrs Gandhi was handed a copy of the memorandum signed by the other three members which said: "Unless action against Saini is taken, we shall not be able to sit with him in any meeting." The four have kept their word and Saini has reportedly not been allotted any work.



Chaudhry (left) and Saini: physical assault

Defence Plea: For his part, Saini, who was a briefless lawyer until he was made a PPSC member by the then Union home minister Zail Singh on the last day of President's rule in May 1980, first defended himself by saying that Chaudhry deserved it. To the Government's charge-sheet he replied that he had acted in self-defence, saying that Mrs Chaudhry was "in great anger" and was going to hit him right in front of her office. Finally said Saini: "I did not slap her at all. This is all a cock-and-bull story."

Saini also tried to meet Reddy, but in vain. Reddy feels that Saini should go, but that could take a long time. The state Government's report, sent to the Union Home Ministry on December 27, has to pass through the Law Ministry and, the Prime Minister's Secretariat, to the President before disciplinary action can be contemplated.

Accusations: The PPSC itself does not have an unsullied reputation. During the Akali regime, former chief minister Prakash Singh Badal and his colleagues often accused it of selling posts. However, there was no formal enquiry and Chaudhry vehemently denies the charge agreeing, nevertheless, that the PPSC could do with a better image. Says she: "During 1982, we selected candidates for 20 positions interviewing over 8,000 aspirants; this is no small job."

Despite this zeal, the chief minister does not hold too high an opinion of the PPSC; says he: "It is only lately that the complaints have dwindled and the work has looked up."

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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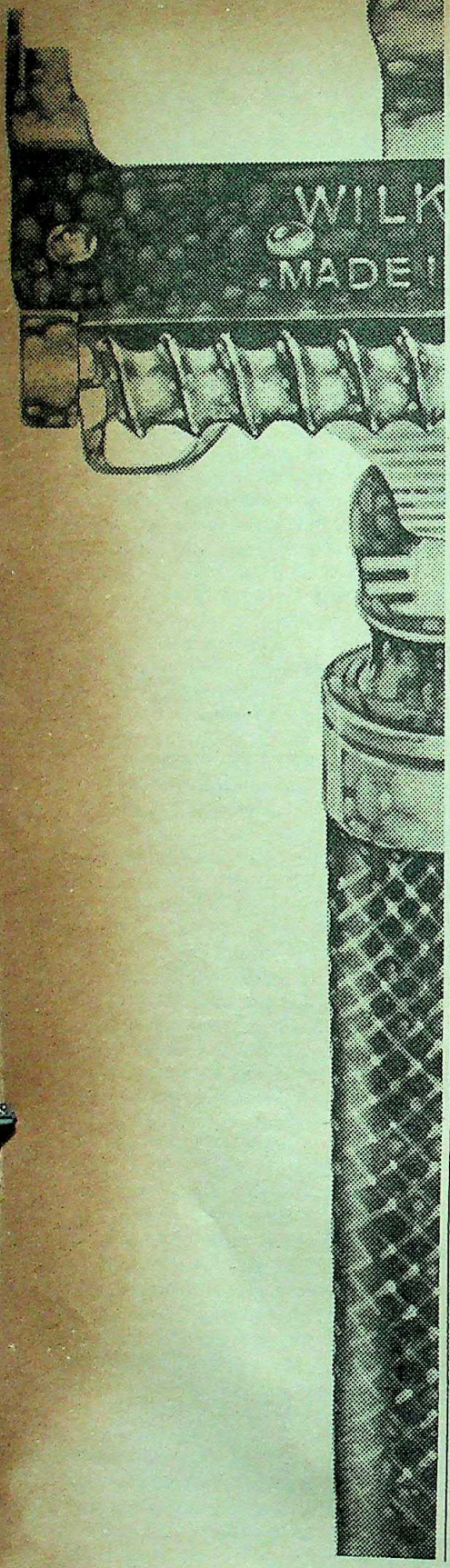

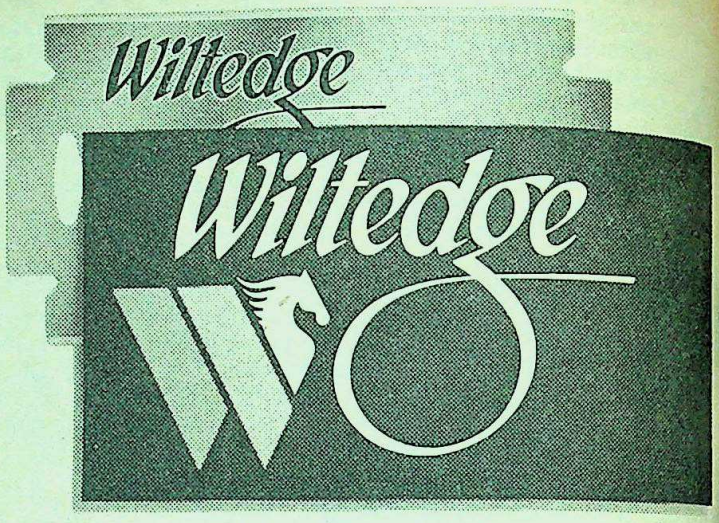

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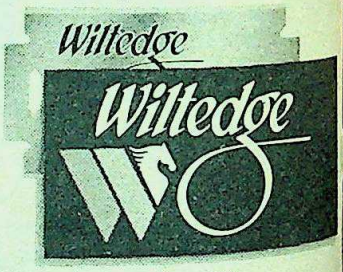

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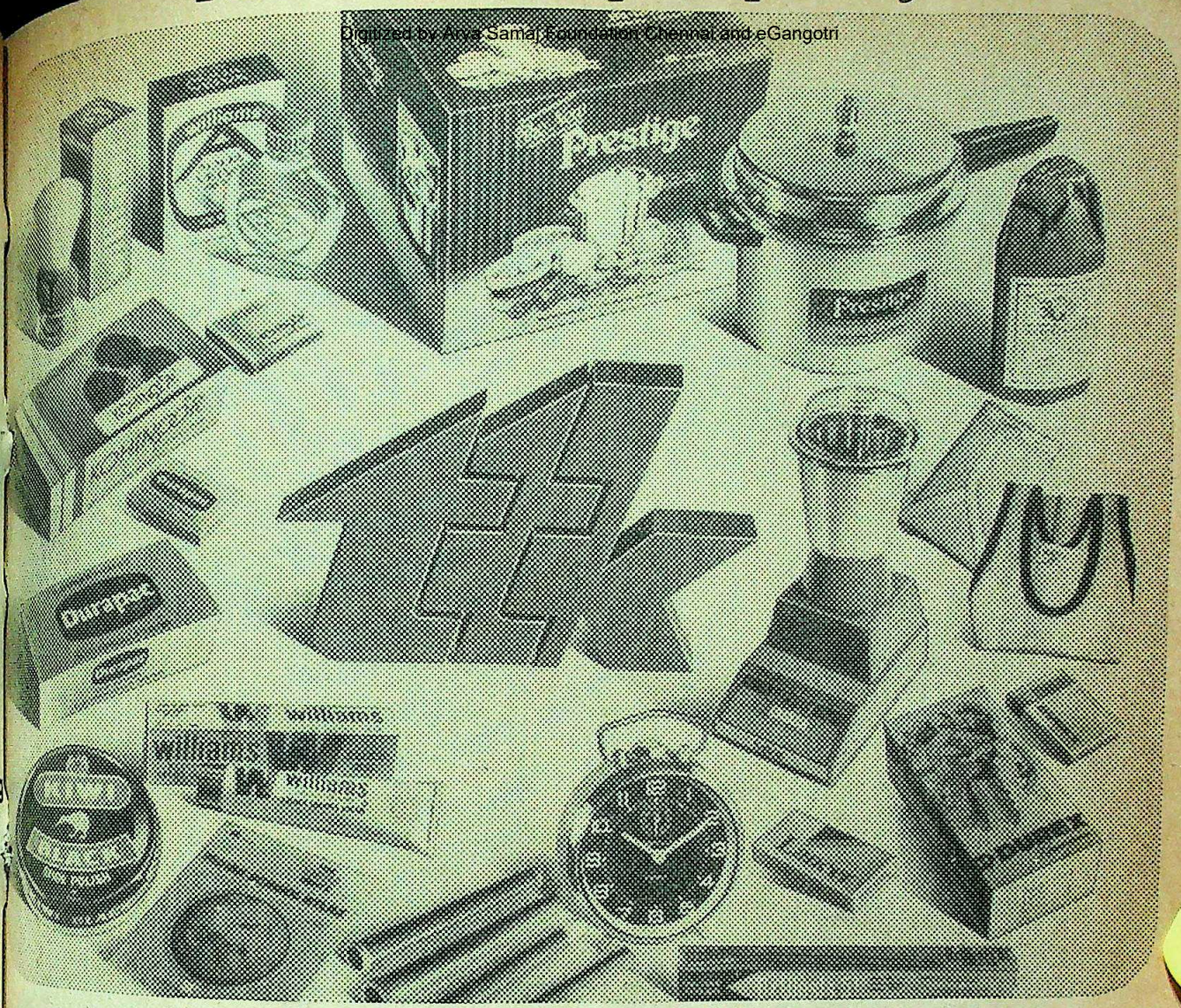

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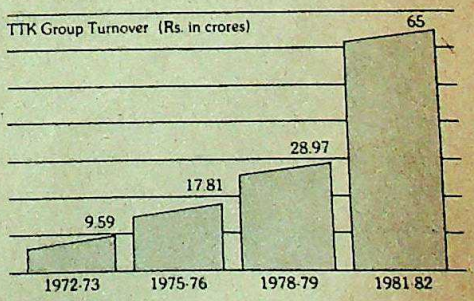

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RALA

Anatomy Of Violence

TRIVANDRUM had never seen the likes of it. For 12 hours, on December 30, rampaging mobs were allowed the freedom of the city. And while they burned and looted at will, city's entire police force sat in their ions, kept in at the express instruc- of Chief Minister K. Karunakaran elf.

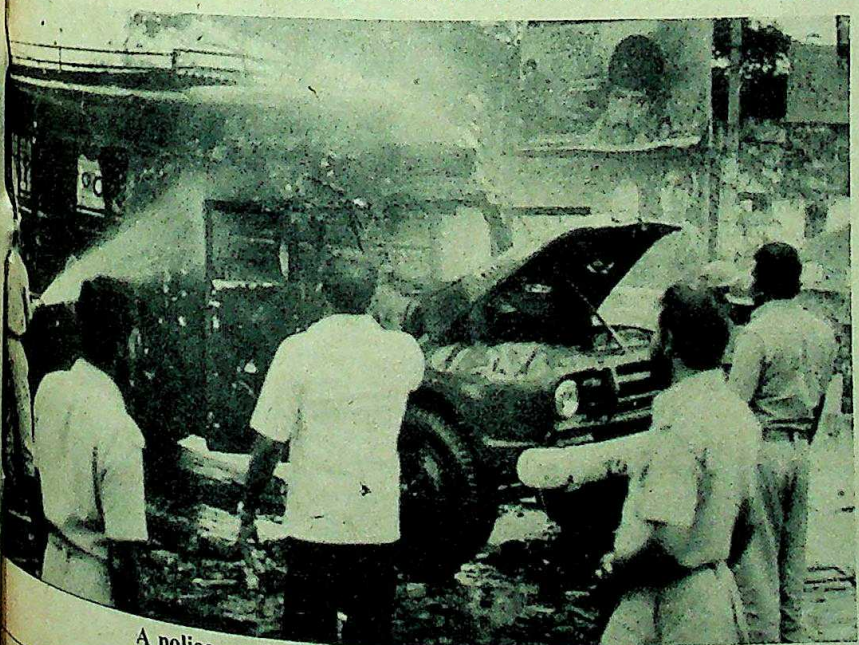
The Government's weak-kneed res- e came in the wake of a police firing Milad-i-Sharief procession Alleppey on December 28. unakaran, who had flown from Bangalore immediately ounced a judicial inquiry the firing. In a desperate to stave off trouble on the of the Assembly elections Karnataka and Andhra desh, he also put a wave police suspensions and sfers into motion. This ted strong resentment in police force and did not succeed in ing the Muslims, who called for a wide hartal on December 30. The al was peaceful all over the state—but Trivandrum all hell broke loose.

Vayalar Ravi: under severe pressure

Tardy Reaction: It was only late in evening that the Government recovered its bout of nerves and decided that army had to be called in. By then the s had done their worst. In Chalai Bazaar, the city's main shopping centre, textile and electronics shops had been thoroughly looted. Parts of the bazaar were in ashes and several fires took hours to bring under control. One man, trapped inside a burning shop, died before help could reach him.

At one point of the day a group of teenagers set fire to half a dozen small roadside shops almost in front of the Fort Police Station. They walked away from the scene with a range of smuggled goods, casually munching fruits picked up from roadside vendors, singing film songs as they went. From across the road, policemen in front of the station watched without doing a thing. It was the same elsewhere in the city. All efforts to goad them into action during the day proved absolutely futile.

A fortnight after the flare-up the people of the state are still asking why. The Government has sought to explain its actions by saying that it was anxious to avoid upsetting Kerala's electorally significant Muslim population. Karunakaran withdrew the police from the city, hoping that the hartal called by the Muslims would be peaceful. Says Karunakaran: "Protests were natural after the Alleppey firing, but we did not believe that such a thing would happen in Trivandrum." Adds Home Minister Vayalar Ravi: "We had to keep the police under restraint against an agitated mob, to preserve the communal harmony which has been Kerala's pride."



A police van set on fire in Alleppey: mob fury

This is very far from being the whole truth of the matter. Several of the Government's actions still defy explanation. Its initial reluctance to hurt Muslim susceptibilities is understandable enough, though everybody admits that calling the police off the streets is hardly the way to handle such a situation. But it became clear pretty early in the day that the rampaging mob was composed entirely of anti-social elements. If proof was needed of who was involved in the riot it came afterwards when the police recovered textile, cassettes and other electrical goods worth lakhs of rupees from the haunts of known anti-social elements.

New Controversies: Home Minister Vayalar Ravi claims that the Opposition incited the trouble to discredit the Government. At a press conference he told newsmen that he had seen a blue-shirted Centre of Indian Trade Unions worker carrying stones to put up road-blocks. His explanations, however, have only opened up new controversies about why the Government had remained supine after it discovered that the rioters were anti-social elements and there was no danger of hurting the Muslims. The state Secretary of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) V.S. Achuthanandan says: "The Government is trying to implicate opposition workers in the recent incidents. The Government is trying to wreak political vengeance on the Opposition."

There is little doubt that the Government was under heavy pressure from the Muslims and crumbled in the face of it. Though Deputy Chief Minister C.H. Mohammad Koya reiterated after the firing that the interests of the Muslims were safe in the hands of the Muslim League leaders, the Congress(I)-led front lives in constant fear that Koya will lead his party out of the front. The Muslim League, with its 14 MLA's is the second largest party in the ruling front, and if it were to switch sides it would be enough to topple the Government.

The worries of the Congress(I) have been increased because of efforts for a merger between the Muslim League led by Koya and the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) which is in opposition at the moment. Koya also has his grouses against the front and admits: "I am very unhappy in the present set-up." He has also been upset over the raging controversy over reservations which has assumed a sharp edge after the recent Nair

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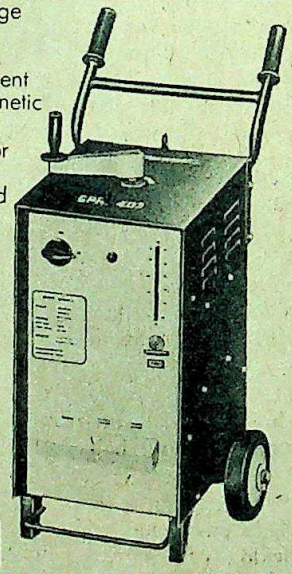

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...elan (INDIA TODAY, January 15, ...). The election in neighbouring states ...re the Congress(I) was ranged against ... Muslim League had also created ...ness.

The Government is now trying its ... to contain the damage done by the ... Initially it tried to hush up the story ... pressurised news agencies into killing ... news that the army had been called ... Now it is ignoring all calls for the ...e minister's resignation. Karunakaran ... also said that there will not be a ju... inquiry into the incidents. Instead ... will only be an internal police in... But this is hardly likely to assuage ... people of the state, whose confidence ... Government has been badly shaken.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

BIHAR

The Favoured Few

THE TUSSLE between politicians and bureaucrats takes on many forms. A new manifestation was the short-lived eviction drive launched by the Jagannath Mishra Government to evict unauthorised occupants of government quarters. The drive, which succeeded in dislodging 135 officers, both gazetted and non-gazetted, and a single MLA, was halted under alleged political pressure. The stalemate has left a hit-list of 35 government functionaries, of which 20 are MLA's and MLC's, in limbo. No notices have been served on them.

The only MLA who was singled out for attention was Krishna Nand Singh alias Sardar Krishna Singh. Singh, who had been engaged in dissident activities against Chief Minister Mishra in recent months, was simultaneously expelled from the party and evicted from his residence in Chajjubagh while he was in jail under the Crime Control Act. Following his release, he has moved the high court and secured a stay order. The isolated action has pro-

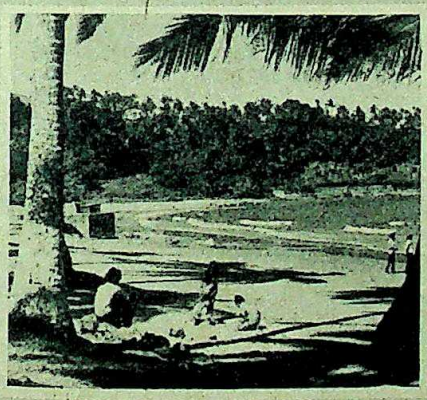
ANDAMANS

Beautiful Trap

PORT Blair, capital city of the Andamans, an archipelago of 293 islands over 1,200 km away from the eastern coast which was imperial India's penal colony (popularly known as Kala Pani) seemed just that for over 300 tourists stranded there last fortnight. As young Delhi businessman Girish Sobti mournfully said: "It took over a week to get a flight out here. Now I want to get back but there's no seat available for two weeks. I feel so isolated."

He had reason for his complaint since he had been waiting for an urgent call to Delhi to come through for two days. He wanted his family to use some influence with Indian Airlines (IA) in Delhi to get him a seat back. Even if he had got through it is unlikely to have done him much good. The problem is of a different nature. Since early last month, the two Boeing 737 flights a week from Calcutta and one flight a week from Madras to Port Blair are bringing plane loads full of tourists into the islands but taking only about half of them back. The snag is that Port Blair airport's short runway can only allow a maximum of 75 passengers to take off. In addition to this backlog is the arrival of various passenger ships from Madras and Calcutta which unload another 750-1,000 passengers per month, a number of whom want to travel back by air.

Although, the facilities for tourists are limited, the Andamans are proving to be a growing attraction for Western tourists interested in scuba diving and other underwater sports. There is also a regular Russian group of about 20 tourists who fly in from Madras every Sunday and leave the next Friday for Moscow via Calcutta. Apparently, a holiday in the Andamans is offered as a reward for good work done. On top of this, Port Blair is becoming a popular destination for government employees as it is the only town, besides Agartala, which is on the Government's approved list for leave travel concession by air. Besides this seasonal traffic, the flights have to cope with the travel needs of the local residents.



An Andaman beach: isolated charm

Immense Pressure: At the centre of all this pressure is a mild-mannered station manager of IA, S. Paul, who is battling against stiff odds. The small two-roomed office of IA is besieged daily by passengers who beg, cajole and threaten to get a confirmed seat to the main land. Apparently, the solution lies in IA sending a modified Boeing 737 called 'Dash-17' which has the extra thrust required for a full payload of passengers. Says Paul: "If the head office could send a Dash-17 aircraft, I can not only please the passengers but also increase IA revenue by Rs 1 lakh per flight as the fare to Madras/Calcutta is about Rs 1,800 one way and I can take 50 more passengers."

But the problem is that Paul is not sure if the Dash-17 is coming till 10 minutes before the flight lands as it gets into the range of the airport's control tower. Says Paul: "On flight day I just pray for a Dash-17." His office has an unconnected telex machine and his only means of communication is through his return flights. Last November, IA obviously anticipated the passenger crush when they upgraded the Port Blair post by sending Paul who is in the grade of an assistant commercial manager. Previously, it was manned by only a traffic officer.

Being involuntarily stuck in Andamans can be a disconcerting experience for tourists, especially the Indians, as they have little idea of what to expect in the islands. The main attraction for non-underwater sports freaks is visiting the exquisitely beautiful islands and to swim in the crystal clear waters. But boats for private hire are hard to come by and the sense of isolation can be stifling if one can't take these trips. Port Blair is a one street bazaar town and the night entertainment consists of star-gazing and admiring the moonlight on the sea. Obviously, if the Andamans are to be developed into a tourist haven, better facilities, more frequent flights and a larger airport are required. But then it may lose its isolated charm and as for now, anyone who lands there without a confirmed return seat is likely to have an enforced extended vacation.

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allegations of political vendetta dissident leaders.

Meanwhile, prominent ruling party continue to be ensconced in spa government bungalows which they forcibly occupied. Deputy Minister Urban Development Ranjit Sinha out that antecedents of such occu exist from the Janata days when 20 activists of the Bihar movement, being elected as MLA's, had stormed big houses after throwing out the le occupants.

Favoured Officials: Yet, politicians are the only offenders. There are an equal number of senior officials who, basking in political favour, have continued to enjoy double accommodation with impunity. Counting in their midst inspectors-general of police and commissioners, they are either fortunate in possessing an additional house of their own or in being allotted one in Patna in addition to an official residence in the districts of their posting. There are also those retired MLA's, MLC's and officers who have not relinquished official quarters even several years after leaving service.

The political discrimination underlying the evictions policy was sharply brought into focus last month, with the transfer of N.K.P. Sinha, commissioner, buildings. Sinha was transferred when he protested a brief note from the chief minister's secretariat advising the department to exempt certain officials from the eviction drive. He was reported to have said that the order was illegal because "it would not be proper to leave aside those officials who have political backing and evict others".

With only 400 houses available for gazetted officers and 362 for non-gazetted officers, the housing shortage in Patna is clearly acute. For the approximately 800

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Feminine Fury

IT WAS a sad commentary on the treatment meted out to women by a male-dominated society. Last fortnight when a band of volunteers from Saheli, a prominent Delhi-based feminist organisation, were accused of being members of a prostitution racket by the police, and subsequently threatened with arrest, it reflected the perverse attitude that continues to prevail in India towards women in general. What followed the incident was pure subversion. Sanjay Suri, an *Indian Express* reporter, who went to the police station at Nizamuddin to investigate the story and was locked up for nearly 45 minutes and given a diatribe on Saheli with highly derogatory references.

Saheli invited the wrath of the policemen when it provided shelter to a 22-year-old girl, Uma (a pseudonym), who had run away from an orthodox and constricting atmosphere at home, to strike out on her own. Subsequently the police, accompanied by Uma's two brothers, swooped down on Saheli's garage office, demanding the girl's return. Coming up against stiff resistance, the police and the brothers resorted thereupon to ransacking the office, snatching the organisation's registers and hurling threatening abuses at the volunteers. The confrontation between the police and the women escalated when the volunteers insisted that a first information report (FIR) be lodged against the policemen for manhandling, theft and trespass. The police refused to oblige and in return threatened to lock up the women for abduction and prostitution.

The news of the incident spread like wildfire and women's organisations in the capital reacted swiftly, demonstrating and shouting slogans outside the concerned police station and demanding the suspension of the station house officer (SHO) and the sub-inspector involved in the incident. Several groups in the capital, including the Nari Raksha Samiti, Manushi, the Mahila Dakshita Samiti, Action India and the People's Union for Democratic Rights also joined in to demonstrate against the police action. Following the demonstration, Delhi's Lt-Governor Jagmohan ordered a magisterial inquiry into the entire police incident and Uma was produced before a magistrate to record her statement that she had left home voluntarily. Said a Saheli volunteer, Gauri Choudhuri, indignantly: "Obviously in our society whatever the age of a woman, the only guardianship considered fit is with a male."

INDIAN EXPRESS

Demonstrators outside Nizamuddin police station

There is feeling among many women's organisations that the police are still totally inexperienced in tackling women's groups and their initial reaction is to ignore women's demands consequently leading to confrontationist attitudes. Admits Ved Marwah, the joint secretary in the Ministry of Social Welfare: "There is prejudice in our society against working women especially single women. Our police only reflect the general attitudes." The Delhi incident threw into sharp focus a similar case in Bihar last November concerning a girl who ran away from home. (INDIA TODAY, September 30, 1981).

A factor which has increasingly added to the alienation between the police and women is the changing character and functioning of voluntary women workers. Women have shed their image of the docile and subservient, weaker sex and emerged with much more contact at the grass roots level, fighting street politics and well-versed with the law and the press. The police, however, find themselves incapable of handling this new brand of feminism.

These sporadic incidents are strong pointers towards a general trend. Attitudes are difficult to change by parliamentary and court strictures. Even among some of the women's groups traditional attitudes about the need for women to accept their lot unquestionably persists. It is only a few who have the courage to change these hardened and regressive attitudes. Said Madhu Kishwar, the founder of Manushi: "I certainly don't see myself as a social worker but rather as a political worker. The difference is between do-goodism and changing the order of things." Although the signs of change are emerging slowly it will be a long road to freedom.—COOMI KAPOOR

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officers of the IAS, the police service and the Bihar Civil and Administrative Service (BCAS) vying for accommodation, the situation has been further aggravated by the 100 flats which have been 'legally' requisitioned by MLA's and MLC's out of the gazetted quota. Consequently, several officials have been placed in desperate straits. To cite only two, Commissioner (Forests) T.C.A. Srinivasan is staying with his 70-year-old mother in one room of the circuit house; and Additional Commissioner (Revenue) C.S. Prasad is living in one room of the officers' hostel for the past 15 months. Commented an official angrily: "A house in Patna makes or mars the career of an officer. Everyone transferred to Patna has to wait six months to one year to get a house. By the time they get it, they have had to do a lot of political kowtowing."

Appeals Ignored: According to the BCAS Association President Gyanoo Singh: "About 90 per cent of the state's officers are homeless in Patna and other cities." He said that the association had, time and again, appealed to the Government to adhere to its policy that those officers who had their own houses should not be allotted official flats but "our appeal has fallen on deaf ears". Fed up with its selective allotment policy, the Bihar unit of the IAS association also recently adopted a resolution urging the Government to adopt a healthy policy, to create a separate pool for officers and free the houses from illegal occupation.

Officers of the building wing of the Public Works Department (PWD) admit that the situation would not have reached such a stage had the department been active in the past. The Government has not constructed a single house, barring a housing complex on Baily Road, during the last 15 years. Two years ago, Jagannath Mishra had announced a Rs 5 crore housing plan for officers and other government staff. But the promise was soon forgotten, and the Finance Department had not come forward with any proposal. Said a senior officer of the department: "We don't even have funds for this purpose. What we are doing almost every day is that we are going through files, plans and lists. If wishes were houses, we would have constructed thousands of them."

Currently, however, the stalemate has been given a new lease on life. While the district administration asserted that the eviction drive would be resumed, the PWD has reaffirmed that the move has been discontinued—clearly yet another victory for the henchmen of Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra over the norms of government.

—FARZAND AHMED

MADHYA PRADESH

Housing Problem

THE non-allotment of houses to the beneficiaries of a government resettlement scheme a month after they received the title deeds has prompted the normally inscrutable Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Arjun Singh into a rare public display of anger. Taking stern punitive measures last fortnight, he sacked Madhya Pradesh Housing Board Chairman Amolakchand Chajed, a former minister, and relieved two IAS officials of their responsibilities. Said Singh: "What upset me is that I was misled at such a high level when all of them were in the know."

The event that led to this action took place on November 21, 1982. That day, Singh distributed title deeds of houses to some poor people who had been shifted from the heart of the city during an anti-encroachment drive. They were to be given houses in Gandhinagar, an area near Bhopal airport.

Singh: stern measures

All was quiet until December 29 when a news item in the local *Nai Duniya* publicised governmental non-action. This led to Chajed's dismissal and the shifting of Housing Commissioner Surendra Nath and Housing Secretary S.K. Sharma. On New Year's day, Singh went to Gandhinagar again, distributed title deeds to the leprosy patients and publicly apologised, before announcing on the following day that the diseased would not have to pay anything for the houses.

Speedy Construction: The irony of the affair is that the housing board—the butt of public anger—completed this particular scheme in remarkably short time. In mid-March, the Department of Housing and Environment informed the board that a loan of Rs 43 lakh was to be utilised to construct 756 housing units, each at a cost of Rs 6,000. Work got underway and on April 9, the department wrote to say that the board was to recover money from the allottees at the rate of Rs 20 per month during the first two years. In the third year, the rate was to be Rs 30 and from the fourth year onward Rs 40 per month.

For the board, this was an uneconomical proposition since it had given the loan at an annual rate of 8.5 per cent. With the addition of another half per cent as administration expenses, the interest on Rs 6,000 worked out to Rs 45 per month. Therefore, the instalments could not even cover the interest, let alone the principal.

Even though the construction of houses was completed, this question remained unresolved and two days before the distribution of the title deeds, the board wrote to the department voicing its objections. While the board's written objection came seven months late, it is certain that the department and the Housing Minister Chandra Prabhash Shekhar were aware of the problem. However, no decision was taken and so when Singh gave the title deeds they contained no details of the premium. This rendered them legally void and the allottees homeless.

Even after the ceremony, the file was not processed. As Arjun Singh remarked in a strongly worded official note in this connection: "From the files it appears that perfunctory efforts were being made to finalise the premium but nothing concrete emerged till December 27, 1982."

Prevarication: While Singh's anger was only natural, he failed to carry his posture of punishment to its natural conclusion. At one point his note said that the housing minister, the housing board chairman, the housing secretary and the housing commissioner request me to inaugurate the scheme and distribute the title deeds. A little later it added, "the democratic people of accountability will have to be applied without any distinction in matters. In this case, this faith and (of the poor) has been rudely shaken. those responsible will have to bear consequences". In spite of such strong statements, Singh balked at taking action against Shekhar and merely asked Shekhar for an explanation.

If Singh is to be taken at his word, this could mark the beginning of a stance against men in positions of responsibility. Last fortnight, addressing state's senior officials, he told them, in effect, to try harder. Said Singh: "The problem today is that people in positions of power have all too ready explanations every time there is a lapse in performing their duty. And they have scapegoats. This has got to stop and I hope the message is fairly clear."

—SREEKANT KHARE

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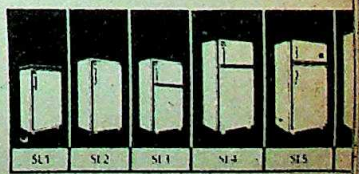

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SHYA PRADESH

olitical Punditry

IT WAS an effective mix, created after stirring three parts of religion with one part of politics. This stew, brewed in Jyoteshwar, a remote village in Madhya Pradesh's Narsinghpur ct, attracted several hundred and people. Estimates of the crowd from 3 lakh to as many as 6 lakh. most remarkable thing about the ching was that almost everyone got a of mileage—political or otherwise—out . And it was remarkable because shwar, a small village of about 500 ple, is a full 15 km from the nearest way station and 56 km from the ct headquarters of Narsinghpur.

The man at the centre of attention the tall and bearded Swami oopanand Saraswati, who is the karacharya of Sharda Peeth in rka. It was at Jyoteshwar, situated in rest, that Swaroopanand apparently d "enlightenment" after years of er, beginning in the early '40s. And, fore, it was here that Swaroopanand ded to have a temple with the idol of oddess Shri Rajarajeshwari Tripura ari Devi.

The hefty Swaroopanand is about 53 s old. He was born in village Dighori eoni district and left home at the age years for Varanasi where he stayed some sadhus of the holy city to gain ous knowledge. During the freedom gle he took an active part and was d for about nine months. Following release, he lived for several years in the forest at Jyoteshwar. During his subsequent travels, his fame spread, and he became the Shankaracharya of Dwarka last year.

Consecration: The state Government gifted about 70 acres of forest land and construction of the temple began about 15 years ago. The 218-foot-high structure, whose cost of construction is estimated at Rs 1 crore, was raised solely from the donations of devotees. Last month's festival was to mark the installation of the goddess's idol, a 5-foot marble statue created by sculptors from Jaipur. Apart from nearly a dozen prominent politicians of the state, the Shankaracharya of Shringeri was also present. And the star attraction was, of course, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who flew in for an hour on the afternoon of December 27, one day after the idol's consecration to meet Swaroopanand and address Adivasis.

One of the explanations for his popularity is the devotion of Vimla Verma, the state's minister for public works. Says she: "The first thing that attracts followers is the simplicity and grace in his personality. There is an inner radiance that can only be with a man who has found enlightenment. Moreover, Maharaj can communicate with any audience at any level to make them understand." She adds that though Swaroopanand does not make a public display of his powers like Satya Sai Baba, he nevertheless has a certain something by which he sometimes almost magically sets right the personal problems that confront his devotees.

The faith of the devotees was evident in the way they rushed to touch Swaroopanand's feet; and when they couldn't they were satisfied to touch the dust over which his vehicle had passed. The luckier pilgrims slept in tents; but the vast majority spent the winter night out in the open, with their tearful children alarmed by the rush and the noise. In the morning, burnt out fires stood as evidence of their night watch. During the day, nearly 3,000 harassed policemen tried to carve out some order from the chaos that prevailed, freely using the stick if needed.

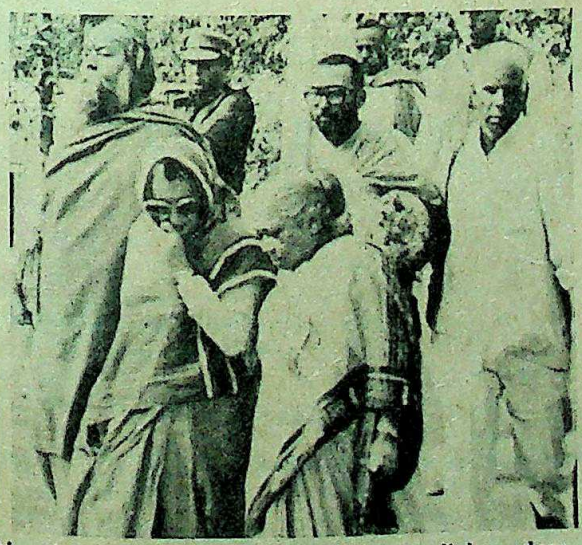
But there was no stopping the crowd: it had not come so far to be halted by a few men in khaki. Inside the temple, priests pleaded with the people to keep moving but they simply stood transfixed, chanting prayers and making religious offerings. They had come from far, some of them all the way from Bihar and West Bengal. At Narmada Kund, a tank of muddy water, they jostled one another to get a bucketful. The water, flowing through a pipe, is believed to be from the holy river Narmada which flows some 700 km away.

Arrangements: Providing for such a vast human flood was not easy and the administration was hard pressed. To provide water, 20 tankers, as many tanks and 50 taps were installed. The entire road from Gotegaon (before Jyoteshwar sprang into the limelight, it was a dust track) was tarred. Special arrangements were made to provide essentials like milk, firewood and fuel for vehicles. Post offices, telephones and dispensaries were set up and 80 special buses plied daily to Jyoteshwar. And for the VIPs there was constructed, overnight, a double-storeyed rest-house.

Mrs Gandhi's visit is believed to have been made possible primarily because of the exertions of Union minister Gargi Shankar Mishra, who represents Seoni. Her presence furnished yet more evidence of her religious inclinations which seem to be growing with every passing year. Obviously, she does not like this trend publicised; news photographers were prevented from photographing her with Swaroopanand in religious places.

While drawing solace from religion and the Shankaracharyas on her electioneering journeys in the south, Mrs Gandhi must have been greatly comforted by the enormous crowds that cheered her at every step. Party leaders are never slow to take a cue from their Supremo: Chief Minister Arjun Singh visited two religious *babas* within a week of Mrs Gandhi's trip. And from now on, religion may well become a new item in the ruling party's games in the state which, after all, revolve around devotion to Mrs Gandhi.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR



ra Devi's idol (left); Mrs Gandhi and her entourage during a visit to a religious place

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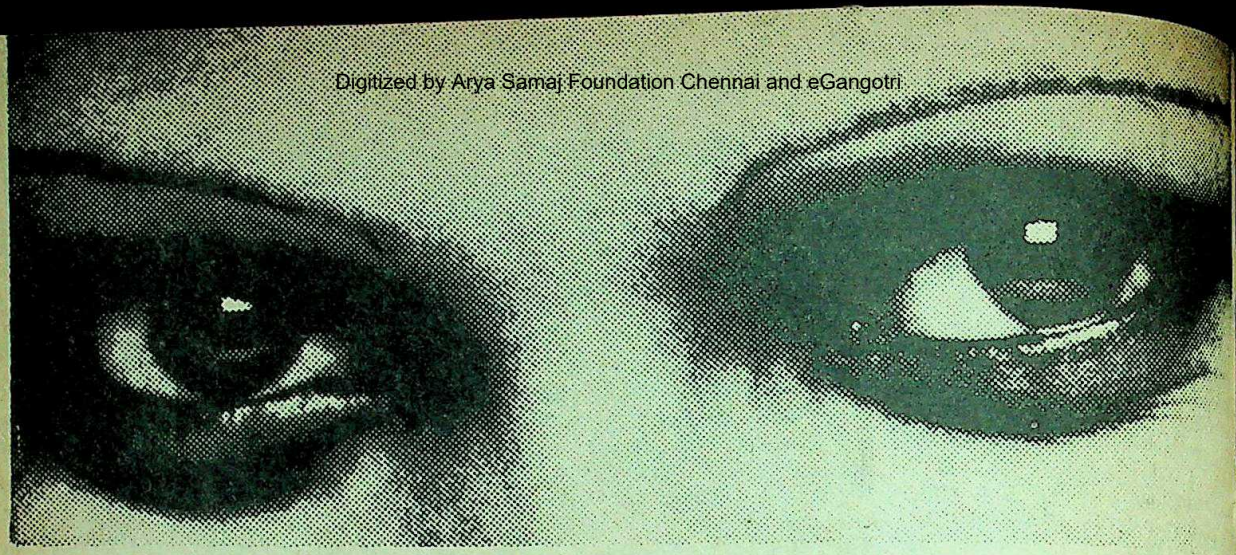

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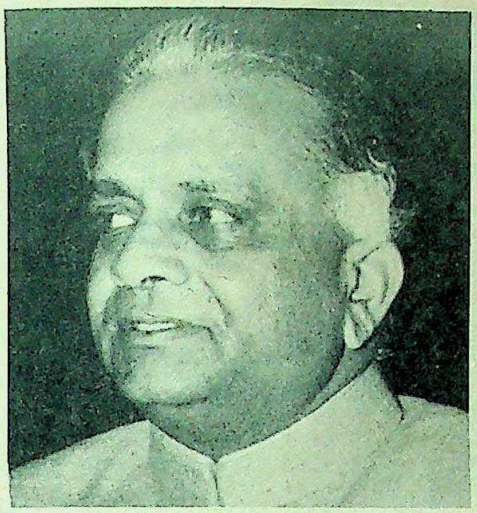
ASTHAN

racks In The Edifice

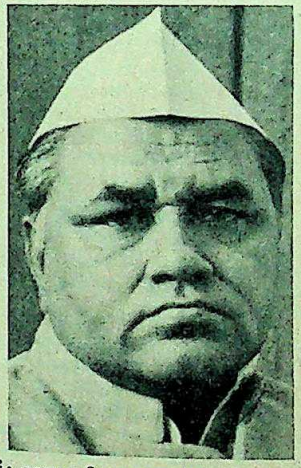
WITH a humiliating defeat at the Assembly polls in the south, the Congress(I) was facing a fresh bout of stormy weather in Rajasthan trying to stamp down dissident activity.

fortnight, 81 Congress(I) MLA's mus- courage to hand over a memoran- o the Chief Minister Shiv Charan r, demanding an immediate meeting legislative party to discuss famine work for the drought situation, the mentation of the 20-point program- d holding elections of the legislative which have not been held for the five years.

Although the memorandum did not se the Government, a nervous r promptly organised a counter- orandum through Health Minister ingh Rathor, asking the MLA's to on it to express their "confidence in Rathor, however, could summon 47, out of an Assembly of 147 Cong- MLA's to sign on the memorandum. the 47 MLA's, 27 are ministers. Al- Rathor maintains that the 47 ories were the same MLA's who had on the earlier memorandum, he however, diffident to reveal their s, claiming they were "confidential". The dissidents, however, claim that very fact that the names were kept t has amply proven that Mathur has unable to win over many MLA's from camp. Said Rampal Upadhyay, 47, a er cooperation minister and one of dissident MLA's: "Mathur could get about 15 MLA's from our camp to his memorandum." Although Mathur and Rathor have emphasised that the memorandum submitted to them was "totally harmless", the newly emerging dissident group led by former chief ministers Jagannath Pahadia and Hardeo Joshi, feel otherwise. Said Ramdev Singh, a leading dissident MLA: "We did not want to be impolite. We subtly wanted to tell Mathur that we are not happy with the famine relief programmes, as out of the 26 affected districts 13 have been totally neglected."



Chief Minister Mathur: besieged



Pahadia (left) and Joshi: cause for complaint

Curbing Dissidents: Mathur who had been maintaining a deliberate low profile about the dissident issue, however, hit back last fortnight. Said he bitterly: "I will not be intimidated nor cowed down by the pressure tactics of a group of MLA's." On December 27, Mathur sacked Bhanwarlal Bhadada, former MLA and chairman of the Bhilwada Urban Improvement Trust. The move was seen as a deliberate attempt by Mathur to contain dissident activity.

Mathur's troubles started after he reshuffled his Cabinet on October 15 last year so as to accommodate Pahadia's men, who were shaping into potential dissidents. Expanding his Cabinet from 19 members to 27, Mathur inducted well-known supporters of Pahadia like Hiralal Devpura as revenue minister; Hanuman Prabhakar, relief minister; Ramkrishna Verma, sports minister, Dula Ram, social welfare minister; and Chogaram Bakalia as deputy power minister. Unfortunately for Mathur the move only invited potential dissident activity. Said Pahadia: "I have nothing to do with the memorandum. I did not sign it. All I have to say is that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is my leader today and every day and I will always do whatever she wants me to."

Although Rathor maintains that there has been no dissension at Cabinet meetings, he does not rule out the possibility of there being an underground campaign by ministers against Mathur. Said Dinesh Dandi, ayurved minister: "Ever since Mathur took over, he has been encouraging casteism and feudalism. He has appointed people from his community in key positions, demoralising the bureaucracy." Said Mathur: "I cannot make everyone a minister. I have tried to do my best, but I do not know why a section of the MLA's have turned against me. Anyway, it is Mrs Gandhi who put me here. I will remain as long as she desires."

Meanwhile the dissidents are preparing to meet Mrs Gandhi to complain against the non-functioning of the Government in Rajasthan sometime this month. And with the latest developments one fact is certain: Mathur will have to wade through trying times in the weeks ahead with MLA's lashing out at him from all directions accusing him of rampant corruption, nepotism and favouritism.

—RAMESH MENON in Jaipur.

GUJARAT

A Party Is Born

IN EVENTS heavily tinged with irony, the historic Navroji Hall in Ahmedabad, which had seen the formation of the Gujarat unit of the Congress(I) four years ago under the presidentship of Ratubhai Adani, recently saw a breakaway Rashtriya Congress (RC) emerge under the aegis of the same man. The dramatic reversal of roles, unprecedented even in a ruling party currently beset by dissidence, saw Adani at the party convention in the company of notables like Mahipat Mehta, MP and former vice-president of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee-I (GPCC-I); Maganbhai Barot, MP and former deputy finance minister; and two Rajya Sabha MP's, Kishore Mehta and Ramsinh Rathwa.

With no concrete programme in sight,

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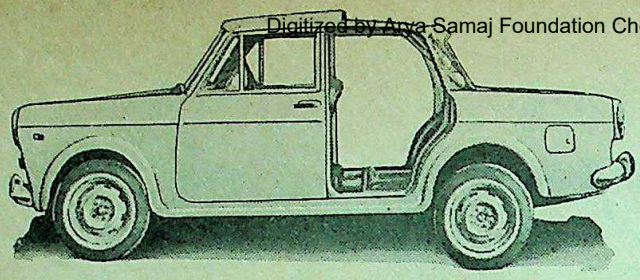

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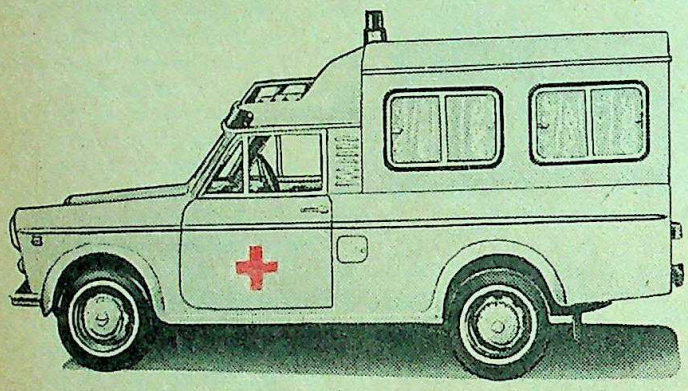

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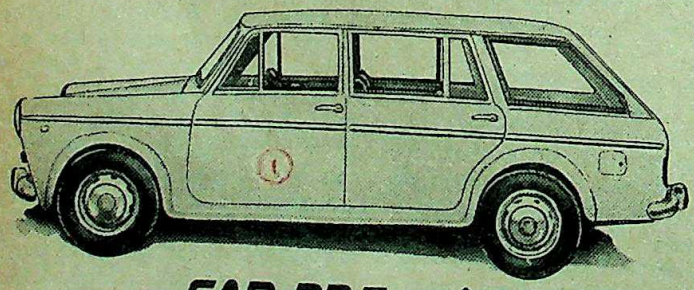

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speeches made by MP's, MLA's and ck-level leaders struck a populist note ing to "re-establish values in public life bring back prestige to the Congress". olitical resolution passed at the meet- said that Prime Minister Indira hi and her party were voted to power people with a lot of aspirations. But ical corruption, administrative ineffi- y and a tendency to brush aside s destroyed the fibre of public and l life. Asked Mahipat Mehta with stable rhetoric: "Did thousands of s shed blood in the freedom struggle ing party politicians to make money r the poor to be exploited?"

Coming back from political wilder- the short, balding Adani, 69, said in -minute speech that it was ridiculous e Congress(I) to say he had quit be- e he wanted power. In fact, he poin-

Chairman R. Adani (second from right) and others at the party convention

et, he had turned down prestigious ons in the Khadi Board, the Ship- Corporation of India and Indian Far- Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd (IFFCO). dged that he would never contest ction or run for any office as the of the people had to be fought".

otional Rhetoric: The rhetoric an emotional chord with a motley ce which consisted mainly of small rs and farm labourers. In addition, were long-time workers like lecturer Kadia, 52, who is a Congress(I) sec- y in Kadi. Said he: "We built the ess with so many dreams. Now it uses corruption and inefficiency." g weight to the ranks of the disillu- d, the hoary Congress leader Sakal- Patel, 74, who had quit the party in a few years back, said: "We do en have a semblance of the commitment that was so prevalent during the days of Mahatma Gandhi. I joined the Rashtriya Congress as it promised the scope for some constructive work." Then there were some political aspirants like Mohini Shah, 29, an advocate who was not very clear on why she had joined the new party.

The RC has also become a platform for elderly political outcasts, who have joined it. Making a desperate bid to come back into politics were Jashwant Mehta, former state home minister Amul Desai, former health minister, Narbeshankar Paneri, former vice-president of the state unit of the Janata Party, Manubhai Trivedi, former secretary of the Pradesh Congress(U) and Pratap Shah, former MLA.

While the elders grouped together to lament deteriorating political values, the party did not succeed in attracting younger elements. Asked Manibhai Ranpara, Congress(I) MLA from Rajkot: "It is easy to talk of values and change but where are the youngsters to start a revolution that the RC wants?" Adani however insisted that the party would take its own time and slowly involve large groups of Harijans, minorities, labourers and middle class supporters.

Unexpected Response: Both Adani and Mehta, who have a good following, intend to systematically enlist party workers starting from the grass root level, especially in Saurashtra and Kutch. This hope was underpinned by the unexpectedly favourable initial response that the RC received from Congress(I) cadres. The party organisers, who had expected 2,000 workers, were pleasantly surprised when over 5,000 grass root level workers turned up and joined the RC at the convention.

This must cause anxiety in the state unit of the Congress(I) which has seen a rapid erosion of lower cadre workers in the last few months. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has also been strengthening its base, making rapid inroads into rural pockets (*see page 59*). Cautioned Health Minister Manoharsinh Jadeja: "The Congress(I) in Gujarat cannot afford to have any rifts in the party. The Rashtriya Congress will affect the Congress(I) adversely if grass root level workers are joining it."

Soon after the RC was formed, the Opposition was quick to hail it. Former Janata chief minister Babubhai Patel and BJP leader Makrand Desai even called upon Adani to bring together like-minded elements who wanted to oppose the "misrule" of the Congress(I). Indeed most of the old Congressmen and Janata Party men may gradually rally around the new party. This is mainly because the Janata Party surveys an uneasy future in Gujarat, being hounded off the political arena over the last two years by the BJP and the Congress(I). However, this places the RC in a dilemma. If the party allows Janata and Lok Dal leaders into its midst, its moralistic political argument loses its edge. Alternately, if it manoeuvres in isolation, as some of its leaders are inclined to, it might not take off at all.

Unperturbed: Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki has, however, remained quite unmoved. Soon after the party was formed, Solanki squarely blamed the breakaway group for communal riots in the state without giving any specific instances. Said he: "The new party will in no way affect the Congress(I). On the contrary, the party has emerged stronger and purer after their departure." His scepticism was solidly backed by the Congress(I)'s continued majority of 139 seats in a 182-member House in which other parties were placed variously as Janata–17, BJP–13, RC–8 and independents–5. And it was graphically illustrated by the failure of the all-Opposition no-confidence motion, criticising the Government failure to relieve scarcity and cyclone-hit areas and to check communalism, and charging it with corruption, favouritism, nepotism and casteism. None of the charges could be convincingly substantiated.

Nevertheless, the significance of the RC lies in the timing of its emergence. It incarnates dissidence at a moment when the Congress(I), beleaguered by infighting, lost a stiff electoral challenge in the south. The setback there may establish the viability of the political risk that dissidence entails and encourage the expression of the increasingly evident internal strains within the Congress(I). —RAMESH MENON

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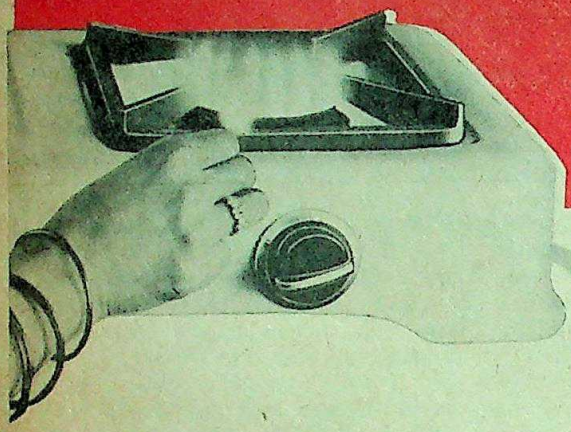

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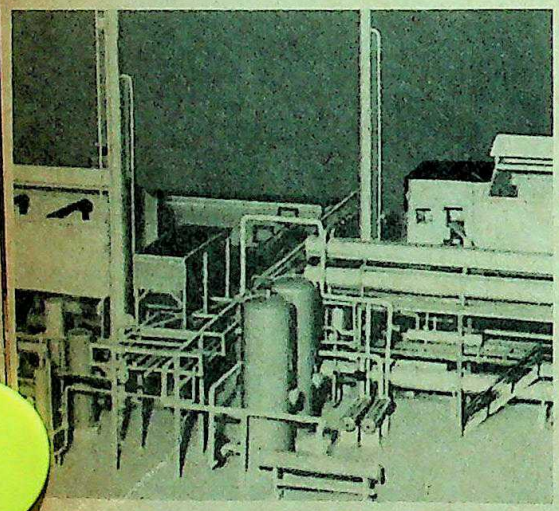

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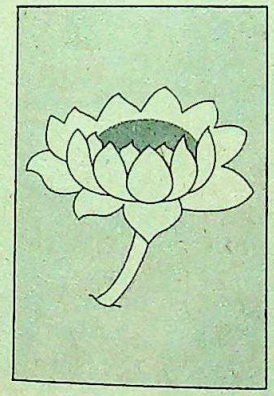
New Threat

TWO BY-ELECTIONS in Gujarat last fortnight were clear signals that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was upward bound in the state. In the Limdi assembly constituency in Surendranagar district, a supposed Congress(I) stronghold, BJP candidate Jitubhai Rana defeated his ruling party rival Jagmal by 6,691 votes. The defeat was all more humiliating because the seat had been held by the late Trambaklal Dave, former panchayat minister. Even more galling for the Congress(I), Maru polled only 1,000 votes while independent candidate Ranjit Gohil managed as many as 12,823 votes. In Jodiya assembly constituency, the Congress(I) managed to save face when its Govindbhai Bhimano scraped past Govind Patelki of the BJP by 2,148 votes.

Both Limdi and Jodiya witnessed an intensive poll campaign by the Congress(I), with a galaxy of leaders camping for days in the area. Obviously, ruling party stalwarts feared that the defection of dissidents from the party had harmed its image, necessitating the frenetic campaign. However, it did not help and the Congress(I) retained an important seat to the BJP. In fact, the BJP appears to have overtaken the powerful Janata Party. Of the eight by-elections held since the June 1980 assembly elections, the opposition has won four—and the BJP has won three of these.



Labour Success: More alarming for the Congress(I) is the BJP's success in the working class localities of Gomtipur and Jamalpur in Ahmedabad, which have a sizeable Muslim population. Disgusted with the apparent handling by the Congress(I) of the closure of the Monogram and Marsden textile mills—which rendered nearly 70,000 workers jobless, 70 per cent of them Muslims—the workers have, practically *en masse*, deserted the Congress(I) for the BJP and the newly-started Bharatiya Kamdar Kranti Dal (BKP), which campaigned for the reopening of the mills.

Ashok Bhatt, BJP MLA, has been addressing evening meetings in the area, attended by up to 3,000 workers. Jitubhai Barot, former Union deputy labour minister who incurred the wrath of the Congress(I) high command for leading a 'jail bharo' movement of the textile workers last month, fails to draw even a fourth of the crowds. Says Mohammed Vashim, who works at the Monogram Mills: "We avoided the BJP as Congress(I) elements drummed into our ears that it was a communal party. We are no longer afraid of it."

Fading Image: All this is ominous for the ruling party. Voters in the two localities sent state Home Minister Prabodh Raval to the state Assembly with a whopping margin of 29,581 votes over his nearest rival. Today, graffiti on the walls warn Raval not to step into his constituency. Said Ramsingar Singh, a jobless textile worker: "We went to Raval time and again only to come back with empty promises. We have lost faith in him as he is deliberately avoiding opening the mill for political reasons."

Barot, too, is conscious of the Congress(I)'s fading image; says he of his 'jail bharo' campaign: "I was only trying to neutralise the growing influence of the BJP and rebuild the faith of the Congress(I)'s traditional supporters who are now deserting it." Incidentally, these labour pockets had helped Barot beat the Janata Party's Krishnavadan Joshi by nearly 25,000 votes in the last Lok Sabha elections.

Bitter Voters: Now, however, many voters say that they will ensure that Congress(I) candidates lose their deposit in the next elections. Says slum dweller Mohammed Sayed: "The mills may be opened with government help soon, but we have taken a decision not to support it. We were bitter against the Hindus because the Congress(I) had instigated us. Even Barot had the guts to tell us that the BJP was responsible for the massacre of Muslims at Meerut. We will not allow ourselves to be politically exploited and manipulated any more." Last time, the BJP candidate lost his deposit, next time he could be riding a wave.

The BKP, at the moment, is riding a wave, its membership shooting up from 500 in May to 8,000 at present. It has won a handful of joint management council seats in textile mills, breaking the hold of the Majoor Mahajan. Encouraged, it is planning branches in other Gujarat cities. Said BKP Secretary Ambalal Parmar: "We never expected such tremendous response from Harijans and Muslims. Within two years, we will be the biggest trade union of textile workers."

—RAMESH MENON

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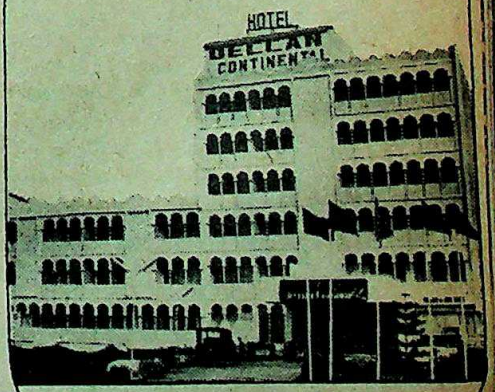

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WEST BENGAL

A Team Effort

A NEW sense of responsibility is evident in the Marxist headquarters on Alimuddin Street in Central Calcutta as the new leadership prepares to prove itself the worthy successor of Promode Dasgupta. Following Dasgupta's death and the sudden realisation that the average age of the established leadership is around 70, younger members like Buddhadev Bhattacharya and Biman Bose have been catapulted into far greater prominence than before.

Saroj Mukherjee, the newly elected 71-year-old party secretary, who until now maintained a low profile, admits that he cannot slip into Dasgupta's shoes and run the party single-handedly. Said the new secretary: "When they (the others in the state committee) asked me to take over the secretary's job, I made it clear that I would expect collective functioning to be a reality and not exist only as a principle. I also made it clear that my health would not permit the running about that Promode Dasgupta did all over the state, and that others, particularly the youngsters, would have to do the job." Thus Bhattacharya, Bose and their contemporaries like Anil Biswas and Shyamal Chakravarty are making their presence felt as they help Mukherjee run the party in a "collective manner".

The change in style of functioning from the Dasgupta days was clearly discernible from little incidents like when Bhattacharya asked Mukherjee whether he had any statements to make to the press who had gathered in the next room, he replied in the negative, but quickly added: "If you have anything to say, you can go ahead." This kind of liberalism was unheard of in the past when only the party secretary had the authority to speak to the Fourth Estate. Mukherjee explained: "In the changed situation we have to give our younger comrades far greater responsibilities."

Collective Functioning: In keeping with this decision, at the recently held political education class for state committee members in Calcutta, Biman Bose was one of the principal speakers. Bose, who is in his early 40s, gained ascendance largely by virtue of his proven ability as a student organiser. He was joined by an even younger colleague, former information minister, Buddhadev Bhattacharya. The two also feature on the list of teachers drawn up by the headquarters to tour the districts, holding educational classes. The need for these classes had been felt in Dasgupta's lifetime, as the party realised that most of the 50,000 members who had entered in the last five years and many of the older members lacked in political training. As Mukherjee put it: "At best these people have read the party constitution or the political resolution adopted at the last Vijayawada congress. But that is not enough, they must be taught Marxist classics like *State and Revolution*."

Even as the party tried to overcome the effects of over-dependence on Dasgupta for organisational matters, it faced another crisis last month when Chief Minister Jyoti Basu fell sick and was advised complete rest. This came as a bolt from the blue, as over the years, the Marxist ministers in the Left Front have got into the habit of consulting Basu even on trivial matters. Despite doctor's orders, ministers continued to go to Basu with their problems as he convalesced in his son's flat. A visibly annoyed Mukherjee told INDIA TODAY: "They do this even though I have instructed them not to disturb Jyoti babu. The problem is that they have come to rely on him so heavily that they have to seek his advice even on petty matters."

COURTESY THE TELEGRAPH

Basu (left) and Mukherjee: a change of style

Chowdhury: overseeing the administration

In Basu's absence from W Building, the task of overseeing the adm tration has fallen on another septuage Land Reforms Minister Benoy Chow Going by present indications, even af resumption, the chief minister's offic also function as a sort of collective senior Marxist ministers trying to Basu as much as possible. Bhatta explained: "We will not allow the minister to go through the kind of routine that he had been pursuing dur past five years, running the adminis and also taking detailed interest in sational matters."

Administrative Changes: With Basu capacitated for the time being and cle no position to undergo the same strai the past, the Marxists are faced with a istrative problems at Writers Building one leader: "Nobody else has as cl picture of the administration in its tot Basu." His *de facto* next man in the Ca Labour Minister Krishnapada Gho been ailing for a long time and the n three man, Benoy Chowdhury, is t with his charges of land reforms and chayats. Since promising men like A Mitra, Buddhadev Bhattachary Chittabarta Mazumdar have fallen roadside at the last elections, the secon Front Ministry has a lot of new fac have yet to establish themselves. T them, the party level sub-committees look after the functioning of each ga ment department, have been asked themselves up and meet more frequen discuss and solve the problems of the ters. Although this may be an ex method of collective functioning, it with it the inherent danger of too cooks spoiling the broth.

As far as the organisation is conc it goes to the credit of the Marxists th transition—from a highly personalise collective form of functioning—has red smoothly. "Promode Dasgupta h behind him a united party, free of nalism," said a proud Mukherjee.

Intent to maintain the unity, this party calendar carries a photograph o late Dasgupta, with his words: "Pr party unity and discipline like the ap your eye." To preserve this unity, the ship has included Gopal Bose, secre the 24 Parganas district committee— gest in the state—in the state secret the party. Bose could not come in because of his reported differences Dasgupta, and the fact that he hi taken in is a clear indication that w strongman no longer there, his com the top are keen to eradicate all dissen if it exists in a very small degree.

—SUMAN

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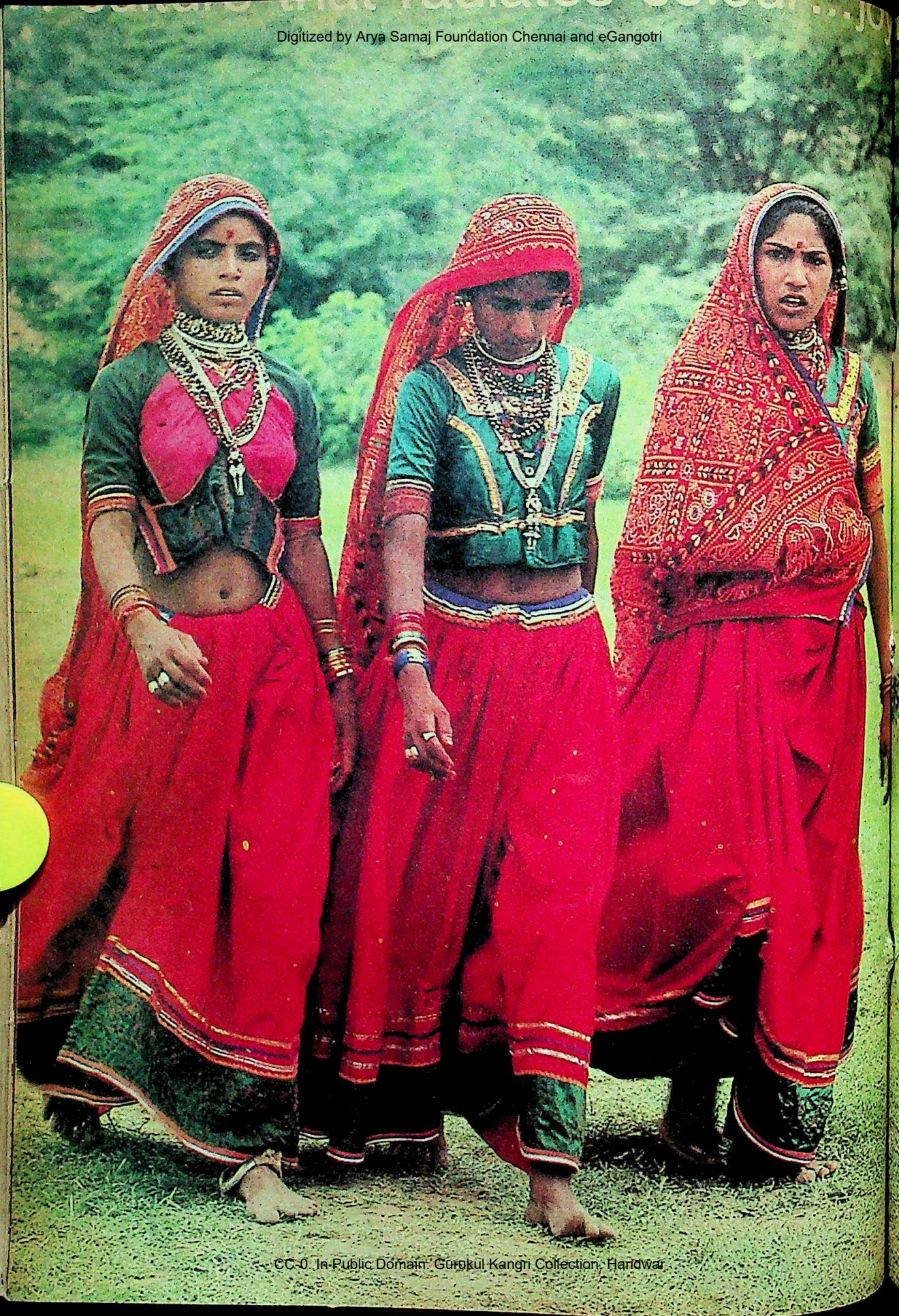

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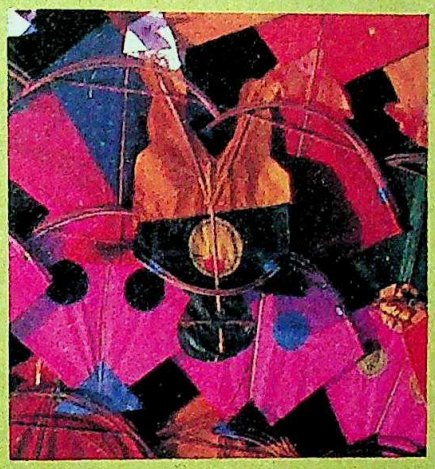
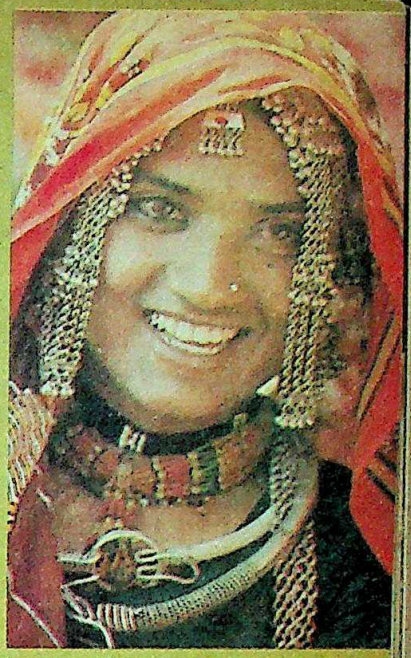


Navratri...nine nights of ecstatic dancing in honour of Goddess 'Ambaji'. Utrayan...the festival of kites, when the skies are dotted with kites of every hue, flown by young and old alike.

Tarnetar fair...A festival of song and dance in honour of Lord Shiva held every year at Tarnetar village.

Bhavnath fair...held every year at the temple of Bhavnath at the foot of mount Girnar to commemorate the visit of Arjuna to Saurashtra.

Madhavrai fair...in honour of the marriage of Lord Krishna and Rukhmani held every year at Madhavpur.



Sarkhez fair...held on the 13t day of the Hijri month of Shaw at the famous Roza of Saint Sheikh Ahmed Khattu Ganj B at Sarkhez.

Dang Darbar...a meeting of tr chiefs clad in traditional costu held every year in the forests Dangs.

Other notable fairs are held a Dwarka, Shamalaji, Dakor, Ar Shah Alam, Patan and Gadha

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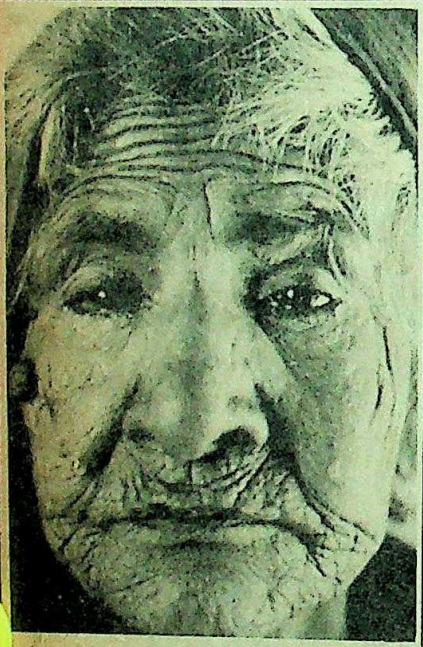
RAJASTHAN

A Trail O

ALL TOO often, India's villages have been a hunting ground for quacks who do not hesitate to take advantage of simple men and women struck by disease with the nearest hospital dozens of miles away. Lately, the country has witnessed a spate of blindings brought about by 'eye-surgeons' ministering to trusting villagers in 'eye-camps'. INDIA TODAY *Correspondent* RAMESH MENON *investigated one such quack who operated in Alwar District, Rajasthan. His report:*

THE SCENE evokes a medieval dungeon: a dank and smelly cattle shed, an old woman on a rickety *charpoy* in a corner, two sightless sockets from which the light has died, staring at the numbing night in mechanical despair. For Saroopi Begla, 70, of Luhadera village of Rajasthan's Alwar district, night came with terrifying suddenness when she put herself in the hands of 45-year-old Amilal Yadav, who promised



"I allowed Amilal Yadav to operate on me as he promised that my vision would once again become as sharp as ever."
—SAROOPI BEGLA, 70

PICTURES BY PRAMOD PISHIKARNA

Hazar Khan, 65, displays the

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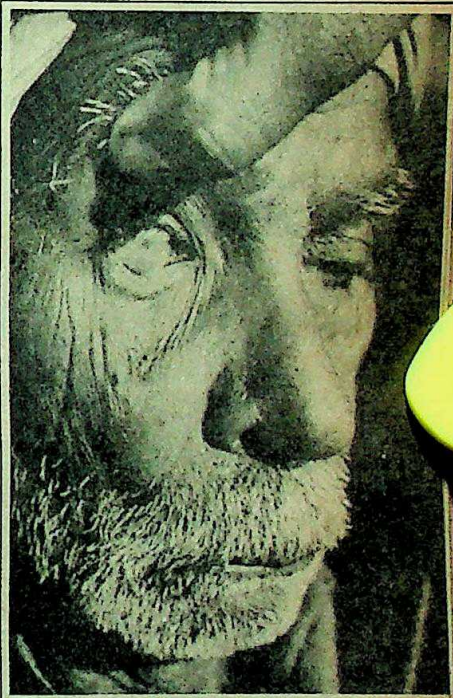
l Darkness

...s that was once his eye

her that her vision, dulled for years with cataract, would become as sharp as it once was after he took his scalpel to her eyes. That was three months ago: today, Saroopi lies writhing with pain in the cattle shed, and talks of death.

Tears roll down her wrinkled cheeks as she recalls the day Amilal, soft-spoken and extremely persuasive, coaxed her into accepting the operation. Hoping for a new lease on life, Saroopi gave in. Her cattle shed became an operation theatre. The mud and cow-dung that made up the 'floor' did not deter Amilal. Five days after the operation, when Saroopi had the bandage removed, the world had become a black, impenetrable mass.

Blindings Trail: Saroopi is one of 28 trusting villagers, spread out in Luhadera, Bichala, Jodia, Baghor and Khajurivas villages in Alwar district who have been victims of Amilal's scalpel in the last three months. Twenty-one of these have gone totally blind in the treated eyes; the rest,



"I was shocked when he asked me for Rs 200 after the operation. I could give him only Rs 51 and so he took away 18 one-rupee coins and a tin containing one-and-a-half kilos of ghee."

—GANGADHAN, 78

displays the

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according to doctors, will gradually go blind. The blindings came to light only after 80-year-old Shambu Yadav of Bichala visited the only government hospital at Tijara, about 15 km away, after the stinging pain in his eyes became unbearable. Doctors took one look at the slits in Shambu's eyeballs and called in the police.

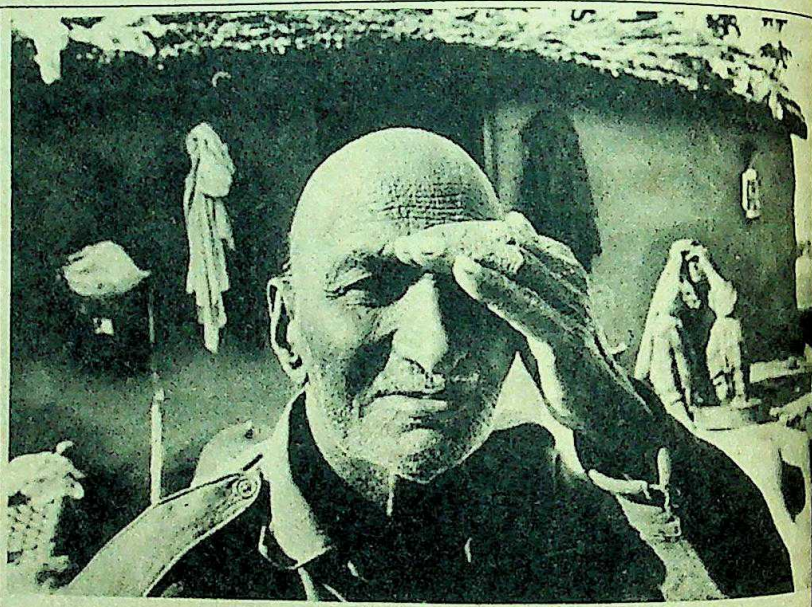
Alarmed health officials who fanned out in numerous Alwar villages discovered person after person whose eyes had fallen to the scalpel. According to estimates, over 70 villagers have been blinded by quack doctors in Rajasthan in the last 10 months. Admitted a senior government official: "It is virtually impossible to check such blindings as we have over 33,000 villages in Rajasthan." But he confessed: "Official estimates of the blindings are much lower than the true figures." This is borne out by the fact that none of the victims had so far complained to the police.

It is not so surprising then, that Amilal has reportedly been operating with success on unwary patients in villages in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan. At present, he is absconding, but the authorities have put together the details of his gruesome operation. His modus operandi is similar to that of a group of quacks who blinded over two dozen villagers in Dholpur in early 1982 (INDIA TODAY, July 31, 1982). Amilal and two assistants toured remote villages distributing pamphlets which described them as experienced and brilliant eye surgeons. Then they organised "eye camps".

Sales Pitch: Illiterate villagers, most of them above 60 years of age, fell for Amilal's pitch. Government hospitals were few and far between, and the villagers felt that this was their only chance of seeing daylight again. Moreover, Amilal operated in his patients' houses and even made them fill up professional-looking medical forms. Before the operation, the patients were told that only a rupee would be charged.

Then Amilal went to work. What he did in most of the cases was, according to some patients, to put some "eye drops", make a semi-circular cut on the eyeball, remove the lens and give it to the patient's anxious relatives saying that the obstacle had been removed and that the 'operation' had been successful. Then he bandaged the eyes, telling the patient and the relatives that under no circumstances was the bandage to be removed before seven days were up—thus giving himself enough time to escape.

Nevertheless, after the 'operation', Amilal showed his true colours when he demanded sums ranging from Rs 150 to Rs 400 threatening the patients with dire consequences if they did not pay. Gangadhan, 78, a *pujari* in Bichala whose left eye was blinded by Amilal said: "I was forced into the operation. Amilal kept telling me that I would go blind if I did not get my cataract removed. I was shocked when he asked for Rs 200 after the operation. I could give him only Rs 51 and so he took away 18 one-rupee coins which I had collected and a tin containing one-and-a-half kilos of ghee from my house." Amilal appeared to keep the major part of the loot for himself; one of his assistants, Lekhram, was arrested in Dehalvas in Haryana on January 4 and told the police that he got a salary of Rs 10 a day.



"I want to see the sun and moon again"
—BHAGWANDAS SHARMA, 60

IRONICALLY, many of the quick-talking quack's victims felt that he was not at fault as "all operations cannot be successful". Saroopi, too, did not blame Amilal, saying that "destiny willed" that she should not see. But the most bizarre twist to the horror story is the attitude of people like Sohanlal Yadav, 65, whose left eye has been blinded but insists that he can see perfectly well and Amilal should not be named. This sounds incredible as doctors can easily see part of the iris coming out of the slit in the eyeball which Amilal had not cared to stitch up.

The reason why Sohanlal and many others in his village shy away from blaming Amilal, and some even desperately try to defend him, is that he, like them, is a Yadav and the Yadavs in Alwar district are a close-knit community. Police health officials were astonished when villagers refused to give any informa that could harm Amilal. In fact, Soh is a distant relative of Amilal's and his Mangturam Yadav, who is the tehsil chayat chief, is leading a pro-Amilal paign.

Frustrated Authorities: In the face this perverse opposition, the autho are wringing their hands. Asks P.K. former collector of Dholpur: "What the administration do when elected sentatives lend patronage to such nals?" Queried S.P. Johri, chief med health officer, Alwar: "If the villa refuse to complain against quacks, can we stop such rackets? To top it a are helpless as there is no law ag quackery."

The latest blindings have embarra the Shiv Charan Mathur Ministry as t came on the heels of the Dholpur inci just a few months ago. What was the Dholpur incidents took place d "strict instructions" by the Governm health and taluka officials to watch for fake eye camps and quacks. Said jasthan Health Minister Khetsingh thor: "This is the last time that blin will take place in the state. They place as village patwaris did not info of Amilal. We have suspended fo them along with two village workers two medical health workers. I have w to health and taluka officials to e

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that this does not happen again. We are planning to hold even gram sevaks and schoolteachers responsible for the blindings. Quacks will be tackled with a firm hand."

However, a senior government official in Alwar pointed out that though the police arrested three quacks at Dholpur five months ago, they were now free, having jumped bail. The official feared that they would "soon be at it again". Alwar Collector Abhimanyu Singh put his finger on the nub of the problem: "If unfortunate incidents of this kind are to be stopped, health facilities will have to trickle down to every rural pocket. Concrete attempts to remove blind faith in quacks and emphasise importance of regular medical checks will have to be made."

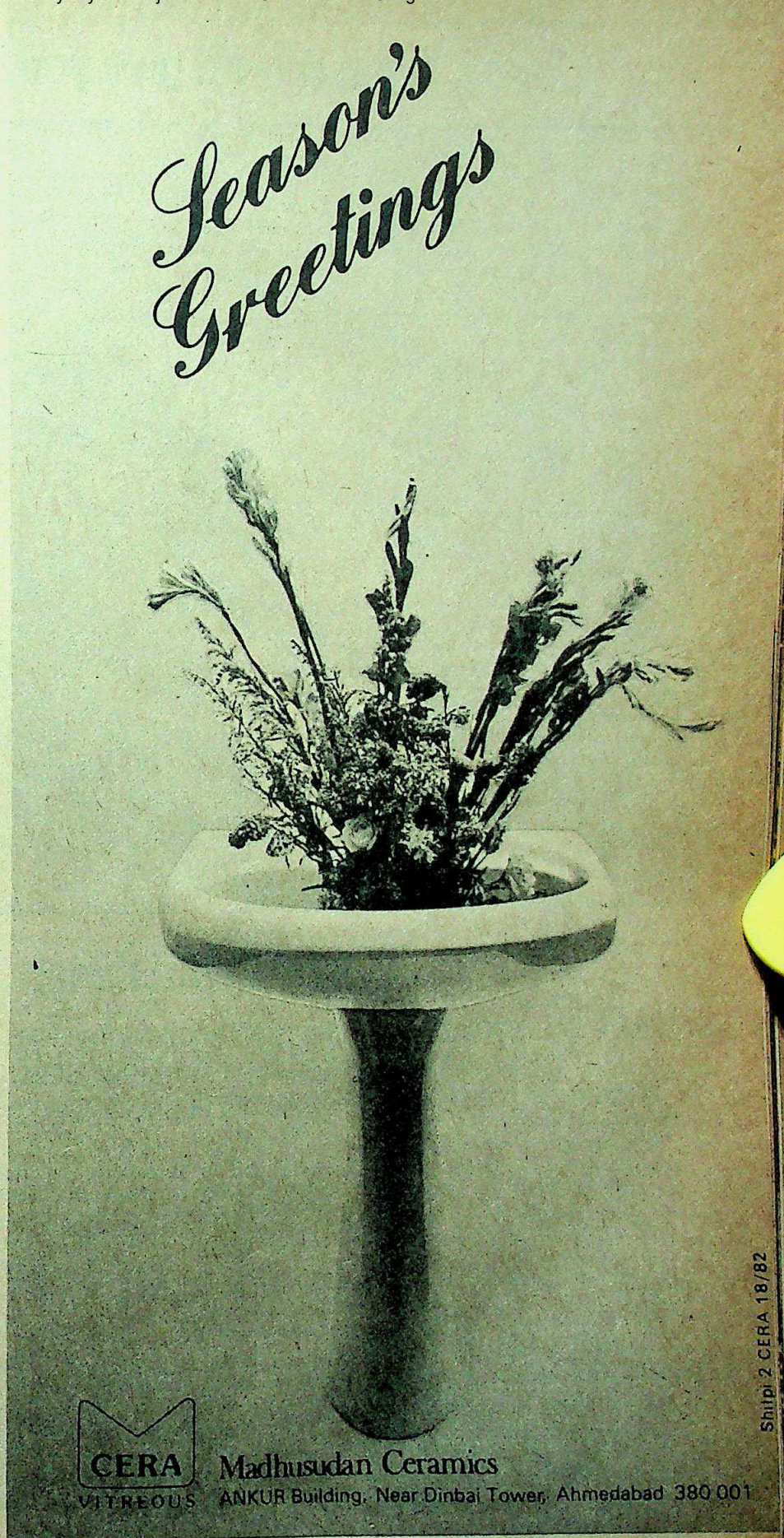
Continuing Faith: After the Dholpur blindings, the Government appears to have woken up. In the last four months, government doctors have identified over 300 patients who will shortly be operated upon for cataract and other eye defects. With visits of health and government officials becoming a regular feature in Khajuwas village, one of Amilal's haunts, former Ved Prakash, a communist party worker, asks: "Why is the Government now interested in nabbing only Amilal? Why does it not haul in numerous other quacks who play freely with our lives?"

For Amilal's blind patients, however, the world is a swathe of darkness. Many of them have become cynical. Said Gindo-, 50: "I am not going to visit any doctor or allow him to examine my eyes. They might kill me with their medicine." When doctors from Alwar and Tijara visited her house to treat her and prevent further deterioration in her sight, she refused to be examined. Her relatives bluntly told doctors to "leave her alone and do not harass her anymore".

That is the general mood, but there are those who display touching faith. Undeterred by the Amilal revelations, residents of Pipalkheda village in Bharatpur invited Harish Chandra, another enterprising quack, to organise an eye camp in their village last fortnight. He was arrested after he operated on Kurmat Meo, a villager whose vision is fast fading owing to inflammation of the cornea. Fake certificates qualifying Chandra as a doctor were recovered from him.

Finally, and most touching, there are those who simply want their sight back. One of them, Bhagwandas Sharma of Ludera, 60, speaks for all his unfortunate fellow victims when he says: "I want to see the sun and moon again." Most of them, however, will not.

—RAMESH MENON in Alwar



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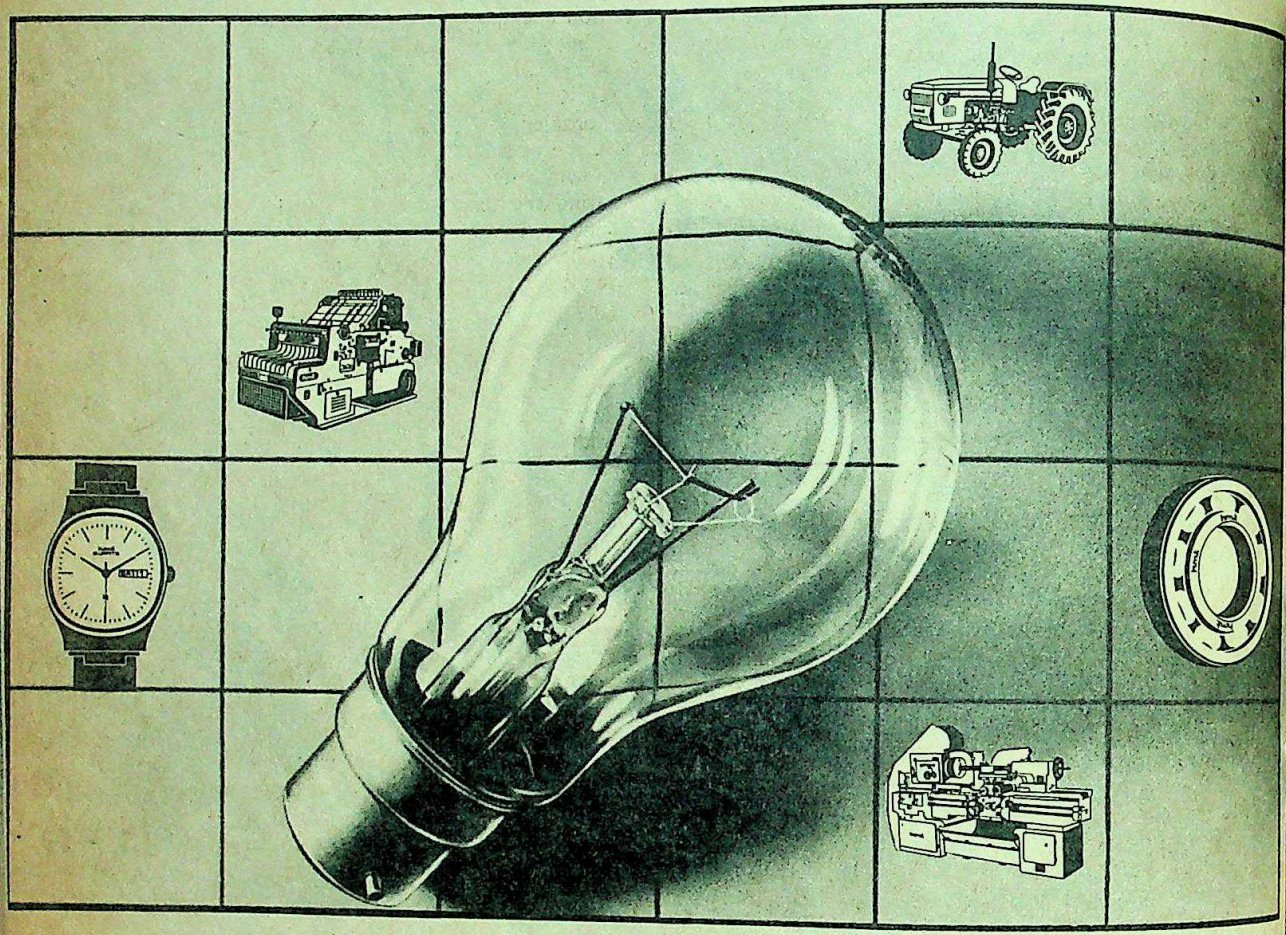

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The Spread Of Socialism

"IT'S EXCITING to watch this spreading pink stain. The years 1981 and 1982 ought to be recorded as the years of Socialist resurgence in Europe," exults a French member of the Central Committee of the Socialist International (SI)—an international political organisation comprised of Socialist, Social Democratic and Labour parties throughout the world committed to the principles of "democratic socialism". The "Socialist resurgence" he was alluding to were the historic electoral triumphs accomplished by François Mitterrand in France, Andreas Papandreou in Greece, Olof Palme in Sweden and Felipe Gonzalez in Spain. In addition, pacing the sidelines restlessly are two other notable socialists: Bettino Craxi in Italy and Mario Soares in Portugal. However 1981–82 also saw Socialists, Social Democrats and Labour parties suffer reverses: they conceded power to Conservative ranks in West Germany, the Nordic states like Norway and Denmark and in Benelux countries. But the four Socialist victories—all effected under the magic catchword 'change'—are important ones. Although in their case, if anyone expected the efflorescence of an identical Socialist programme to combat the economic blight subverting West European nations' progress, there has been none forthcoming.

Ever since youthful Felipe Gonzalez led his Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) to a spectacular electoral victory, political wags in Madrid and Paris have been fond of repeating the gibe that François Mitterrand had done a signal service to European socialism by giving Spanish Socialists a good reason to pursue conservative economic policies. Unlike French Socialists who assumed power armed with an extensive "hit list" of banks and companies to be nationalised and grimly determined to corral lead unemployment with a massive public spending binge only to be cruciatingly halted in mid-stride to opt for austerity measures, Spain's new Socialist government have on their nationalisation list just the country's electricity system. So far, they have devalued the peseta with minimum fuss, steadied taxes, tightened monetary policy, hiked fuel prices and are calling for wage restraints.

Sensitive Issues: The formation of the Socialist cabinet was anxiously watched by Spain's army, the church and industry. Gonzalez, who with his attractive personality and infectious boyishness had charmed Spain's voters, has included in his cabinet, among others, seven economists and seven lawyers. Together they are offering a tranquilising programme of democratic consolidation and administrative modernization and insist they have no 'miracle cures' for Spain's manifold problems: 16 per cent of the population unemployed, an inflation rate roaring along at 15 per cent, a budget deficit estimated to reach the equivalent of US $8.5 billion—one of the highest levels in Europe and a sluggish economy. On the political front a host of sensitive issues confronts Gonzalez: whether the country ought to remain in the Nato alliance, the question of joining the EEC and to find a political solution with Britain over Gibraltar's sovereignty.

During the tense electoral campaign, Gonzalez had some interesting reflections on nationalisation. Addressing Spain's bankers, he said: "We don't have a programme of nationalisation because we have other priority objectives—the stabilisation of democracy and the struggle against unemployment. I think the philosophy that nationalisation is by definition 'progressive' is not based on reality." He added: "In Europe, de Gaulle nationalised and he wasn't a man of the left. Adenauer, who wasn't a leftist, nationalised. And when nationalisation turns into a total state takeover, the resulting economic model—to cite the Polish case which is very much with us—means chaos and the breakdown of the system."

This, inevitably, has caused an ideological distance to develop between Mitterrand and Gonzalez. But the Spanish prime minister asserts that it would be a "huge error" to imitate his French comrade because Spain's inefficient bureaucracy could not absorb or manage a wave of nationalisations. Besides, the Spanish economy has nothing resembling the solid structure inherited by French Socialists 18 months ago.

Military Threat: The other crucial issue on Gonzalez's hands is the question of remaining in the Nato alliance as its 16th member. The Socialist Party had promised a referendum on the issue and have now imposed a freeze on the question. This raises the central question of Socialist Spain's relations with the United States. When George Schultz, the American secretary of state, visited Madrid last fortnight, he attempted to persuade Spain's new leaders to remain within the Atlantic alliance. The Americans reportedly suggested that the Spanish army would benefit enormously by modernization and besides, its officers will be less inclined to attempt to overthrow democratically elected governments—which they did in February, last year. However, if defence analysts of the Iberian region are to be believed, the problem here is that the senior military command of the country reckons the defence of Ceuta and Melilla—Spanish enclaves in North Africa now under Moroccan control—more important to Spain than the defence of Berlin and Oslo. And being a Nato member is no deterrent against future coups if what happened in Portugal under Salazar, Greece under the colonels and Turkey

Mitterrand

Ever since youthful Felipe Gonzalez led his Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) to a spectacular electoral victory, political wags in Madrid and Paris have been fond of repeating the gibe that Francois Mitterrand had done a signal service to European socialism by giving Spanish Socialists a good reason to pursue conservative economic policies.

Gonzalez

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under the Generals are taken as precedents.

Priority Issue: On the question of Spain's entry into the European Common Market, the Socialists are emphatic that it would be a priority but not an obsession. Now that two Socialist comrades are in power on either side of the Pyrenees mountains, will France welcome Spanish membership to the Common Market a little more generously? It seems not because cheaper Spanish agricultural products will be competing with France for EEC subsidies. Queried about this reluctance, a French official accredited to the EEC said: "Well, the Common Market has to get its house in order before enlarging it further." This means Spain and Portugal can cool their heels still further.

Spanish commentators have also suggested that Gonzalez should avoid taking radical foreign policy lines such as that espoused by Greek leader Andreas Papandreou. The fiercely independent-minded Papandreou has tried to cement the identification of socialism with national and patriotic feelings. This goes down well with his countrymen. As with Mitterrand and Palme, his pro-Third World credentials are impeccable. Greece has been the main breaker of EEC ranks in the past two years—notably on Middle East issues. Greece supports the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and does not recognise Israel. Papandreou has also refused to toe the EEC line on other foreign policy matters. He has, however, toned down his anti-American rhetoric considerably. This has not prevented him from maintaining good relations with the Soviets. Prime Minister Nikolai A. Tikhanov is, in fact, expected to visit Athens sometime this year.

Domestic Changes: At home, Papandreou's reforms have been cautious. While nationalisations have been largely postponed, issues such as emancipation of women, institution of civil divorce and abolition of censorship have been aggressively pursued. Greek commentator and editor of *Democracy* magazine, Nicholas Xenos has pointed out that both Mitterrand and Papandreou want dévolution of power to the regions. But while the French embarked on large-scale nationalisations, Papandreou calls for decentralised economic reforms based on voluntary agricultural cooperation and the 'socialisation' of some sectors of Greek industry.

What precisely is the difference between the French Socialist Party and Papandreou's PASOK? Explains Christas Averoff, until recently professor of Greek studies in Paris's VII University: "There is a distinctive difference. The leadership of the French Socialist Party can be branded technocratic. In Greece, PASOK's real strength lies on local party organisation and its grass roots enthusiasm. Which is perhaps one reason why decentralisation is more likely to succeed in Greece than in France."

Cautious reform at home, gradual independence in foreign policy and scepticism about American intentions in Europe—appear common to Gonzalez, Mitterrand and Papandreou. To an extent this is true of Olof Palme, 55, Sweden's globe-trotting prime minister and Scandinavia's best-known politician.

Palme had been his country's prime minister between 1969 and 1976. Since then he has spent six years in political exile and criss-crossed the globe as a spokesman for disarmament groups, a key member of the Brandt Commission and a mediator in the Iran-Iraq war. After he took office last summer he devalued the Swedish krona by a spectacular 16 per cent forcing the neighbouring Finnish centre-left coalition government of Kalevi Sorsa to rapidly devalue their currency twice in succession and angering the conservative governments of Kaare Willoch in Norway and Poul-Schluter in Denmark.

With characteristic innovation, typical of Swedish socialism, Palme announced an economic plan titled "wage earner funds" that has apparently not been tried anywhere else. It involves the use of revenues from payroll and excess profit taxes to buy shares in Swedish industry on behalf of the workers. It amounts to indirect, partial nationalisation of industry and has been bitterly denounced as a "threat to individual liberty" by the big guns of Swedish industry. Explains Bertil Ekdahl, a journalist who has contributed to the country's biggest afternoon tabloid, *Expressen*: "Sweden is a paradox. It has had a Socialist government for most of the last half century. Yet it has fewer nationalised industries than France or Italy or Britain. In addition stocks are narrowly held and a majority of Swedish families own no shares at all."

Swedish Course: How does Palme's economic strategy differ from Mitterrand's? In a recent interview, the Swedish premier was quoted: "Mitterrand came to power after a long period of bourgeois government and he was forced to respond to his constituent's pent-up desire for consumer goods. So he stimulated demand and ran into trouble. Things are different here. We have had almost 15 years of socialism and we have no great gaps between the working class and others. We have a far better climate to stimulate savings and investment which is what Western economies need."

Palme earned the wrath of US governments for his denunciation of that superpower's role in Vietnam. He has supported the PLO and most revolutionary movements in the Third World. In spite this cradle-to-grave welfare state now being in financial trouble, Palme has pledged US $1 billion annually as aid to developing countries.

Yet it is as chairman of the Independent Commission on Disarmament & Security Issues—a body which attracted a complement of Western liberals, communist and Third World figures—that he is most eloquent. He asks: "Why should they (the superpowers) go on piling nuclear weapons to an ever increasing degree of insecurity? I have become increasingly a firm believer in arms control and real reduction. The alternative is horror. There is no doubt in my mind that would lead to the obliteration of mankind."

It is not surprising that suggestions are being mooted to invite this international activist to address the forthcoming Non-aligned Summit in New Delhi in March. There is something in question posed by a Swedish diplomat: "We sometimes wonder if Sweden is not a bit too small for someone like Olof Palme."

Palme

Cautious reform at home, gradual independence in foreign policy and scepticism about American intentions in Europe—appear common to Gonzalez. Mitterrand and Papandreou. To an extent this is true of Olof Palme, Sweden's globe-trotting prime minister and Scandinavia's best-known politician.

Papandreou

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JANUARY 1

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MADHYA PRADESH

Point Of Privilege

"The committee are conscious that the freedom of press is an integral part of the fundamental right of the freedom of speech and expression...if, however, the freedom of the press is exercised malafide, it is the duty of parliament to intervene in such cases. At the same time, the committee are of the view that parliamentary privilege should in no way fetter the free expression of opinion and fair comment."

Extract from the Fourth Report by the Committee of Privileges of the Sixth Lok Sabha

Speaker Sharma: under fire

MAINTAINING a balance between the freedom of the press and the privileges of the legislator has always been a prickly matter. The balance became the centre of attention in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly late last month when it was presented with cases of breach of privilege filed against three publications. Facing the charges were the Bombay tabloid *Blitz*, Ananda Bazar Patrika's *Ravivar* and Bennett, Coleman's *Dinman*. All three were in the dock for questioning the integrity of the Assembly Speaker, Yagya Dutt Sharma.

Blitz was the first in queue when, in the course of reporting on ruling party politics, it made a passing reference to Sharma's character. The matter was raised and passed on to the 10-member Privileges Committee quietly enough. The storm came when the October 10–16, 1982 issue of *Ravivar* carried a six-page cover story on the Sharma family's deals in real estate in their home town, Indore. *Dinman* was on *Ravivar*'s heel, and in its issue dated October 31-November 6, carried a five-page story on the speaker's activities in Indore.

Fireworks were expected when the Assembly session began on December 13. But controversy ignited even earlier when, a fortnight before the session, the public relations unit of the Vidhan Sabha Secretariat circulated "A brief note on aspersions on the conduct of the Speaker resulting in contempt of House" among Bhopal's media men. The seven-page hand-out cited precedents to argue that a speaker's conduct could not be criticised even when it was not directly connected with the affairs of the House. The note was resented by several newsmen in Bhopal. Said one, offering a typical reaction: "Is the secretariat trying to tutor us on how and what we are to report?"

Libel Charges: In Indore, meanwhile, Om Dutt Sharma, the speaker's younger brother, filed two suits each against *Ravivar* and *Dinman*: In *Ravivar*'s case, apart from Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd, 10 others—including editorial staffers—were among the accused. In the *Dinman* case 15 were accused. Om Dutt charged each magazine with libel and with having committed contempt of court by passing comment on a land deal case pending in court. And that was not all. On December 12, Ramesh Mangal, an Indore businessman whose name figures in the *Ravivar* article, filed a complaint with the Press Council against the weekly.

Outside the House, the tall and hefty Yagya Dutt Sharma has maintained a studied silence, saying that comments will only invite fresh controversies. However, he told INDIA TODAY: "The charges are totally false, baseless and frivolous. They have drawn incorrect inference in the absence of facts. In other places, information has been presented out of context. Moreover, there is no allegation that I have misused my position in the chair."

But, in any case, when the matter went before the Assembly—the motion was moved in the House by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislator Choudhary Dilip Singh and four others—the question of whether the allegations were right or wrong was totally forgotten.

On December 16, Sharma invited 17 senior legislators for a one-hour discussion in his chamber. Following this, the House decided by a voice vote that the matter be entrusted to the Privileges Committee.

Redefining Privileges: However, before that, another publication's name figured in a related controversy. Sharma pulled up the state's largest daily—*Nai Duniya*—for misreporting. *Nai Duniya* ran into more trouble when on December 15 it printed an interview with *Ravivar*'s Editor, Surendra Pratap Singh. In the interview, Singh had made critical remarks about the attitude of legislators. Communist Party of India (CPI) legislator Kapoor Chand Dhuwara raised this as another breach of privilege issue. The speaker has, however, yet to decide whether the motion is to be admitted or not.

One curious aspect of the debate was that after the initial step of moving the motion, BJP members by and large kept very quiet. Explains leader of the Opposition Sunderlal Patwa: "Over the last few years people's faith in institutions like the legislature has been shaken—and this is a very dangerous thing to happen in a democratic set-up. Last year, the BJP therefore evolved a code of conduct and by and large we have adhered to it. We are trying to do our bit. In this matter, it is premature to take a stand unless the affair is studied thoroughly. After all, it also involves the freedom of the press." Patwa is one of the two BJP legislators on the Privileges Committee.

The findings of the Privileges Committee will be interesting because its judge

Two of the basic questions the Privileges Committee will answer are whether the speaker enjoys more powers than the legislators and whether he enjoys total immunity, even if an allegation is made of an act that has nothing to do with his duties as speaker.

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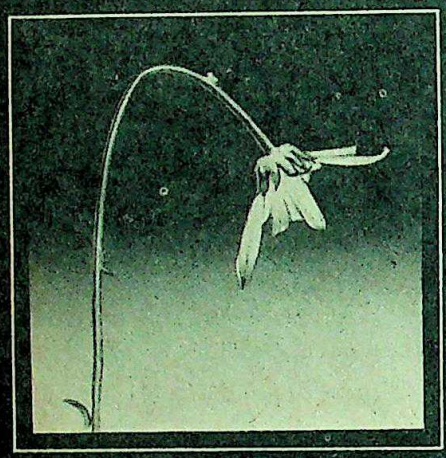

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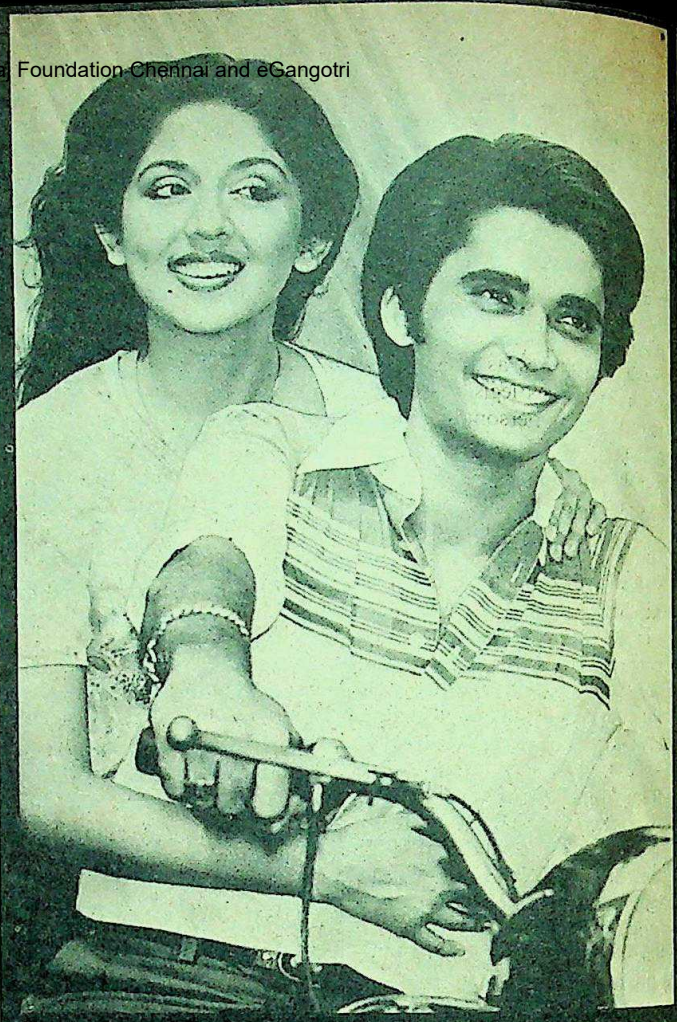

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will once again define the privileges the speaker. Two of the basic questions the committee will answer are whether the speaker enjoys more powers than legislators and whether he enjoys total unity, even if an allegation is made of act that has nothing to do with his as speaker. According to the law, if ter criticises a legislator, he invites a ch of privilege motion only if he tions the integrity of the legislator in discharge of his duties as a legislator. publication criticises a legislator for an committed in his personal capacity, invites no charge.

Unnoticed Issues: There are two other ers which could invite privilege mo- but which have gone unnoticed in sitting. In its press note, the secretariat rs to an 18-year-old case in which Lok a speaker Sardar Hukum Singh faced tions of having amassed wealth. allegations were levelled by a paper a limited circulation which appeared larly—because of which ultimately ction was taken.

In this case, the secretariat's note "Dr Ram Manohar Lohia said that speaker's position was like that of the dent and nothing should be said or en against him and that any enquiry the allegations should not be a proper The prime minister Shri Lal Baha- Shastri has said that he agreed with iews expressed by Dr Lohia." Sharma red to this case at one point even the debate in the Assembly.

Secondly, the circulation of the sec- at's press note itself can be ques- d. The press note, by quoting past gs, was trying to say that "the ion of the speaker in the Assembly is ated one, and is not less than of the ernor." The press note was circulated time when the *Blitz* case was already ing before the Privileges Com- —the note commented on an aspect which the committee was trying to e. And in doing so, it can be said to have fered with the course of justice since regional papers gave the press note ge.

At a political level, the controversy damaged Sharma considerably since, it erupted, he was often described in reports as one of the aspirants for chief minister's chair. Behind his vable facade, Arjun Singh has plenty gleeful about. Party politics, after all, hardly be ignored even if it involves an as august as that of the speaker. As ma himself said bluntly: "I will resign if the high command asks me to step

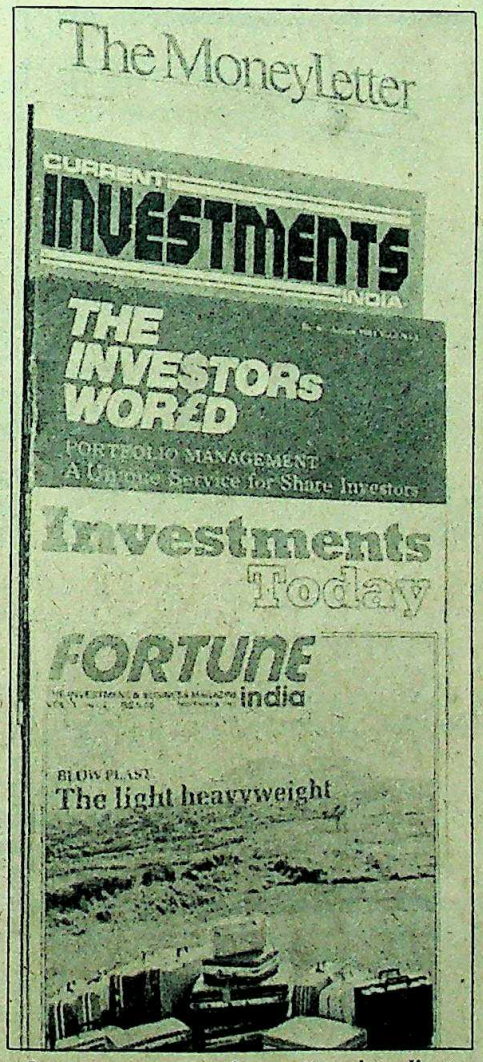
—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

INVESTMENT MAGAZINES

A Bustling Business

THEY have proliferated rapidly appearing with an increasing regularity on news-stands around the country in the last three years. Suddenly popular in the wake of the late '70s stock-market boom, glossy investment magazines and journals specialising in advice on corporate shares have emerged as a fast-growing new publishing field. Three new magazines, two of them launched this year, are brought out from tiny, cramped offices bordering the bustling stock-market in Bombay's Dalal Street; one is published from Hyderabad and a growing string of small-circulation investment newsletters are churned out by market analysts in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Delhi.

Still far from the big league of magazine publishing, investment journals have nevertheless grown rapidly in the past few months. Only six months after it hit the stands, *Fortune India*, an investment glossy published by Bombay-based financial consultants FICOM, has already reached a circulation of close to 10,000 copies; *Investment Today*, another Bombay publication, prints a similar number less than nine months after its launch; and Hyderabad-based *Current Investments India*, which recently switched to a glossy magazine format after almost three years of publication as a cheaply printed newsletter, was last fortnight undergoing an overhaul to make it even more appealing to investors around the country.



Investment magazines: attracting clients

Said E.A. Srinivasan, chief executive of Hyderabad Investment and Financial Consultancy Corporation (HIFCO), which publishes *Current Investments*: "With little marketing effort and an unappealing format, we managed to reach a 12,000-copy circulation in the last three years. The scope for these magazines is so great that in January we will change the magazine into a fortnightly from a monthly and with a completely revamped mix of articles and aggressive marketing, we hope to treble our circulation in a short time."

Inexpensive Production: Most investment magazines had their beginnings in the privately circulated stockbroker newsletters which have been around for over a decade. Begun as spin-offs by portfolio management and brokerage firms seeking an enhanced clientele, stock-market newsletters are little more than tipster sheets which predict price trends by various systems of analysis. Cheaply produced, and yet exorbitantly priced—a weekly four-page cyclostyled newsletter published by P.K. Marfatia sells for a Rs 20 per copy, while others like *Market Outlook*, *Share Market Newsletters*, *Corporate Panorama*, *Market Trends*, and *Investment Bonanza* are offered to subscribers at rates varying from Rs 45 to Rs 500 per year— newsletters are bought largely by hard core speculators and large investors. The glossy investment bulletins, on the other hand, reach out to a far larger population of lay investors who invaded stock-markets following the lure of the hugely successful Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) issues.

For most brokers and financial analysts who launched into publishing, the venture was initially nothing more than a means of attracting clients to their investment analysis and portfolio management divisions since the firms already had active share analysis departments. A bare mi-

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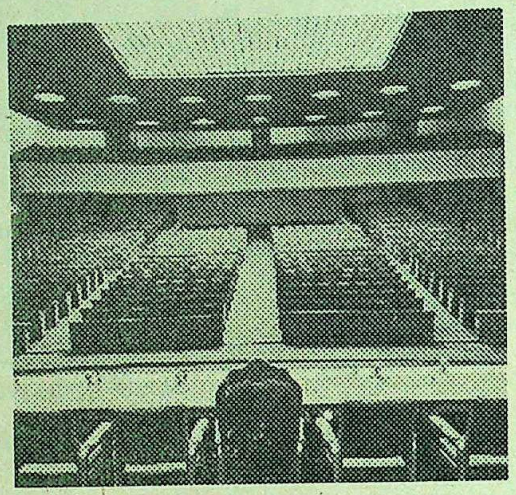

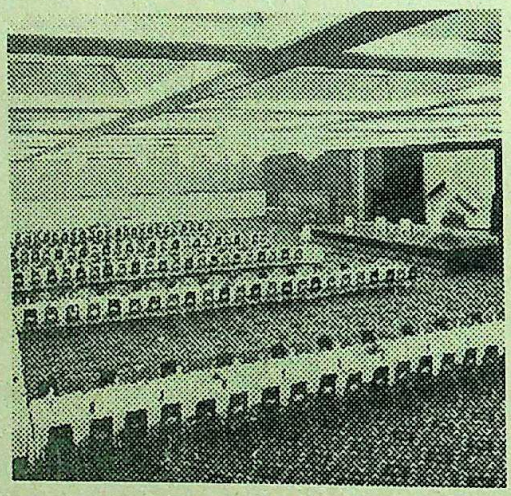

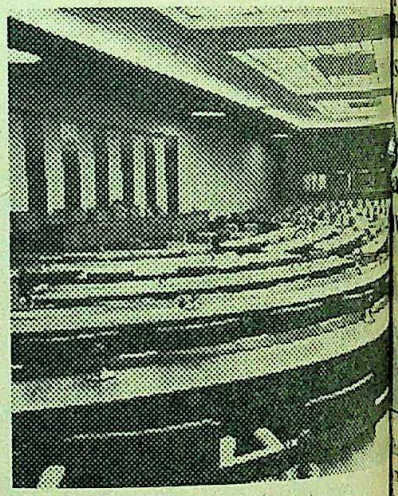

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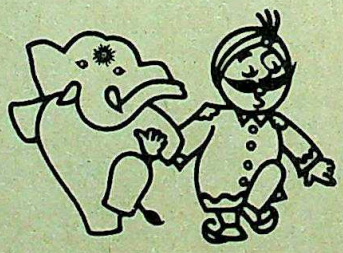

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...of extra effort and expense gave ...a convenient platform for promoting ...services. Edited and published by ...roz Kermani, 26, a chartered and ...accountant who had gained a repu... ...as something of a whiz-kid in ...bay stockbroking circles. *Investment* ...recently introduced a one-time ...folio analysis scheme which costs re... ...Rs 100 for a complete review of ...investments.

Increasingly, however, their pro... ...have begun to see investment ma... ...as a potentially lucrative propo... ...in their own right. Nine months af... ...started *Investment Today* in its pre... ...form, Kermani states that the ma... ...has already recovered its costs and ...shows a small profit. Explained the ...editor-publisher: "We have ...steadily despite the worst stock... ...slump in many years. It's obvious ...the markets start looking up and ...interest in shares is restored, the ...limit."

...Aims: Clearly envisaging a luc... ...future for their magazine, FICOM ...up their portfolio management di... ...and transferred all the resources of ...division to *Fortune India* last June. ...D'Silva, who headed the portfolio ...was made editor of the magazine. ...the new aims, D'Silva said: "A ...drawback of portfolio management ...you cannot really grow. It is physi... ...impossible to properly advise more ...hundred or two hundred private ...whereas with a magazine you can ...to a growing readership which offers ...better prospects in the long run."

> **"People who invest in shares tend to buy every publication they can lay their hands on in order to assess their investment... (this) offers us far more scope for growth than advising a few hundred investors through portfolio management."**
>
> —CLIFTON D'SILVA, editor, *Fortune India*

magazine which reaches stock-market investors all over the country. D'Silva hopes that *Fortune India* will ultimately be able to corner a substantial readership from among the estimated 35 lakh persons who invest in corporate stocks and bonds. "People who invest in shares tend to buy every publication they can lay their hands on in order to assess their investment," said D'Silva, "and we hope to eventually sell our magazine to up to 10 per cent of the total investing public, which offers us far more scope for growth than merely advising a few hundred investors through portfolio management."

Despite the widespread optimism, however, investment magazines have not been without their disasters, and last month Marfatia's *The Investor's World* ended a floundering career of uncertain printing schedules, irregular publication and dropping circulation when it was finally taken off the stands. Run by persons with more stock-market savvy than publishing know-how, magazines like *The Investor's World* suffered more from the vagaries of badly coordinated publishing than the quality of their investment advice. And, last fortnight, copies of Marfatia's cyclostyled newsletter continued to be lapped up at Rs 20 a throw.

Determined Editors: The lack of publishing know-how is reflected even in the apparently successful investment magazines. Put together by skeleton crews—*Fortune India*'s editor D'Silva, in fact, is aided only by a couple of secretaries and peons, and writes virtually all the magazine's articles single-handedly—and lacking an effective sales force, advertisement sales in each of the publications is abysmally low, making them entirely dependent on the cover price for revenues. In terms of layouts, the quality of writing and the general standard of production too, the new investment magazines still have a long way to go.

With the growing realisation of their potential, however, publishers and editors of investment magazines have been gearing themselves up to improve both the product and its packaging. Included in the proposed changes are: a wider coverage of different forms of investment for small investors, including tax-saving investments like insurance, units and provident funds and additional information on commodities, bullion and real estate to add to the corporate coverage and in-depth coverage of new equity issues. And every editor is determined to mount an aggressive drive for advertising. Having caught a glimpse of the possibility, each is determined to carve out a huge new market for his magazine. —CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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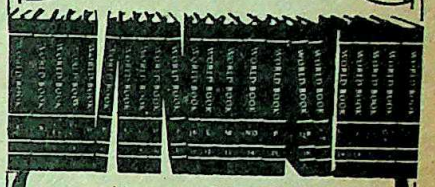

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Star & Style

Fifteen Glorious Years!

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KHUSHWANT SINGH

"I Haven't Compromised"

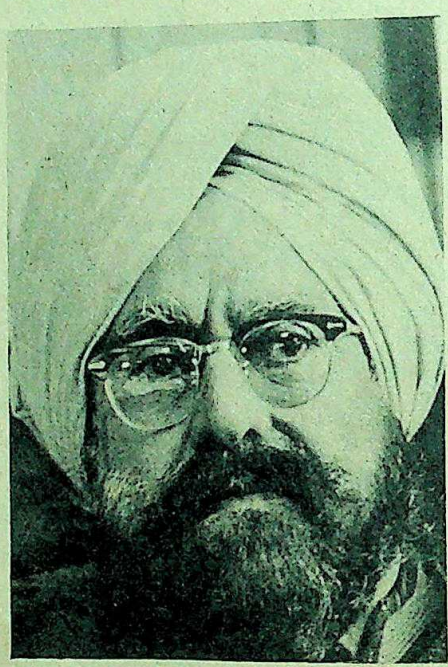
AT 68, Khushwant Singh, ebullient, earthy and a man with an impish sense of fun, is acknowledged to be a household name. At the end of January, Singh, who has delighted readers with his acid and barbed weekly column in The Hindustan Times, *is stepping down as editor after less than three years in the seat. The bespectacled and slightly stooping "gentleman sardarji" has been the subject of much acid debate, but has rarely let that affect his image. Frank and forthright, Singh has changed jobs amidst raging controversy. He was ousted from* The Illustrated Weekly of India *in 1977 by the Janata regime, primarily because of his blatant and unabashed show of loyalty to Mrs Gandhi and the late Sanjay Gandhi, winning himself the epithet of "Khushamad Singh" from an indignant reader.*

The high point of Singh's career in journalism, which started in 1969, was his stewardship of The Illustrated Weekly. *He left his indelible mark on the magazine by injecting into its somewhat dull format, pictures of nudes and his iconoclastic views. The circulation of the magazine shot up dramatically and, with it, his market value. All along his varied career as lawyer, London-based diplomat, author of the best-selling* Train To Pakistan *and* History Of The Sikhs, *and editor of such diverse publications as the Planning Commission's* Yojana *magazine,* National Herald, New Delhi *magazine and of course* The Hindustan Times, *Singh has been many a time charged with inconsistency in his political leanings. Claiming to have no regrets, his analogy of Maneka Gandhi as "Durga astride a tiger", however made a dent in his relations with Mrs Gandhi. But he was able to establish himself in her favour again and was rewarded with a seat in the Rajya Sabha.*

Sympathetic to the cause of women's liberation, Singh is unable to comprehend the readers' objection to his "playfully lewd" references to women in his columns. After leaving The Hindustan Times *Singh has every intention of remaining in the limelight. He will continue his widely read column 'With Malice Towards One And All' in* The Hindustan Times *apart from writing for the Ananda Bazar group of publications. He also has another project on hand—a novel, with Delhi as its backdrop, which has been lying incomplete on his desk for the last 12 years.* INDIA TODAY *Correspondent* COOMI KAPOOR *met and interviewed Singh in his first floor Hindustan Times Building office in New Delhi. Extracts from the interview:*

Q. *I understand the Birlas have asked you to relinquish charge even before your contract expires in May.*

A. I have not been asked to leave early. I am taking the leave accumulated during my nearly three years in *The Hindustan Times*. Let me add that the relationship between the Birlas and me is most cordial.



"My suspicion is that it was Sanjay Gandhi who got me the job in *The Hindustan Times*."

Q. *Was there political pressure on the Birlas not to renew your contract?*

A. That is my conjecture. At the same time I have been quite obviously blacklisted from radio and TV, since around the time of the last Cabinet reshuffle. Even advertised programmes and totally non-political programmes like the "World Of Nature" series, which I have been told had the largest viewing, were cancelled suddenly and without any explanation.

You know nothing remains secret in India. My own friends in AIR and Doordarshan told me that instructions came not to give me so much exposure. Or none at all.

Q. *Where have these instructions come from?*

A. That I wouldn't know. But they obviously they came from somebody close to her (Indira Gandhi) or to the sons. They found my views unpalatable for reasons best known to themselves and took the step. Even a programme like the Akali summit where without a doubt I would be one of the persons normally called, I was not. Small-minded people have done it. But I can't pin-point the individuals. It would be unfair.

Q. *Can you pin-point which of your views was unpalatable? Some feel your fall from grace is because of the consistent Birla's disapproval of your constant and titillating references.*

A. Absolute rubbish. Birla has never been annoyed with me. One of the contradictions of this is that he is asking me to continue writing my column, which they admit is the most widely read column and reproduced in about a dozen newspapers.

Q. *Then was it your selection of Maneka as Sanjay's successor which was unpalatable?*

A. I have been totally misquoted. The column you are referring to was written immediately after Sanjay's death. It was conjecture and the interpretation has been wrongly put. I did not say she was Sanjay's successor. I said she may step on Sanjay's mantle. At that time she had clearly shown that he had no vocation for politics. Maneka was not taken seriously. I only said she's not as much a pamby as most people imagine. They owe a lot to her and when driven to it she can be like Durga on a tiger. But this should be interpreted that I was supporting Maneka against Rajiv or Rajiv and Maneka is an absolute fallacy. It is a tragic state of affairs when, in a country of 700 million, people are being asked to choose between Maneka and Rajiv. The impression has been created that these are we have to choose from.

Q. *Then was the impression that you were soft on Maneka a major reason for your removal?*

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A. Don't put words into my mouth. I
e no doubt that there was a certain
unt of unhappiness amongst the po-
s that be. And I suspect that this is
t they believe to be my stand, which is
correct. And I am sorry for them that
should be such small-minded people.

Q. *With hindsight do you regret you
r that piece?*

A. I don't regret writing it. But it cost
dearly.

Q. *Can an editor of a major national
y in this country survive without
promising?*

A. I haven't compromised and I
n't survived. And it is my distinction
I have fallen foul of successive
ernments. And at least three to four
isters of information and broadcasting,
ing the misfortune to run the state-
trolled media, have had to blacklist
An editor of an Indian national daily
survive for long only if he has the
port of his boss and the boss has the
e. One has to make exceptions. For
mple, in the Ananda Bazar group there
much closer relationship between the
or and the proprietor. Those who own
own papers don't have that parti-
r problem.

Q. *How would you describe your re-
nship with the various newspaper ow-
you have worked with?*

A. The relations between the Birlas
me have been the most cordial. The
ions with the Sarkars of the Ananda
r group have also been very cordial.
for the Jains of the Bennett, Coleman
up, the relationship became foul only
the last stage. I have not the slightest
bt that the Jains were pressurised by
arji Desai or his son to dispense with
services and I got it as much in words
Ashok Jain. The Jains paid the price
bowing to political pressure. *The
trated Weekly* is back to where it was
re I took over. And I don't think the
ors are as much to blame as the pro-
ors. If you go on being mealy mou-
in everything you do that is the re-
You have to take a very distinct line
you really have to have a passion. I
t think my successors had any
sion.

Q. *How would you rate your innings in
Hindustan Times? You haven't left
individual stamp on the newspaper the
you did in* **The Illustrated Weekly.**

A. No editor can leave his stamp on a
ly. I can name my distinguished prede-
ors who left no stamp on the paper. In
I left more stamp because I added
e items.

Q. *To what extent was your appoint-
as editor of* **The Hindustan Times** *due
to your journalistic credentials and to what degree was it to your impeccable political connections?*

A. A combination of both. Attempts were made at one time, which were entirely political to foist me on the *Indian Express*. It wasn't as if I had not made a certain amount of name for myself...my suspicion is that it was Sanjay Gandhi who got me the job in *The Hindustan Times*.

Q. *Some feel that your 'Malice Towards One And All' column should at least spare the dead. Your remarks on Baburao Patel, Rajni Patel and Lala Shri Ram were thought to be in bad taste.*

A. I have no respect for the dead just because they are dead. I don't see how just because a person has died he has acquired some kind of sanctity. If a fellow is a dubious type then the best time to take him on is after he is dead. He can't take you to court. It's completely untrue that the Shri Ram family was offended with my observations. Charat Ram roared with laughter when he met me and said: 'I'm glad to know the old man had a glad eye'.

"An editor of an Indian national daily can survive for long only if he has the support of his boss and the boss has the nerve."

"They don't know how to carry pornography. I did it with finesse. And never a complaint from the court or the Press Council."

Q. *Aren't you somewhat undiscriminating in the way you accept free trips from all and sundry?*

A. I agree. If I get a free ticket to go abroad I take it. I believe I never travelled at the expense of either the Jains or the Sarkars and only once at the expense of the Birlas.

Q. *Presumably you consider yourself a male chauvinist considering you never mention a woman in your column without describing her physical attributes?*

A. Why does that make me a chauvinist? I am very pro women's lib. If I find a woman attractive I say so. I don't make passes at them. I don't see men as sex objects certainly.

Q. *What was your most rewarding experience in journalism?*

A. My stay in *The Illustrated Weekly*. The *Weekly* became a household word during my tenure.

Q. *But* **The Illustrated Weekly** *flourished at a time when there was no real competition. Today's magazines are far more professional and competitive. Could you repeat your success?*

A. I could beat the hell out of them. They haven't a clue.

Q. *A clue to what?*

A. They don't know how to carry pornography. I did it with finesse. And never a complaint from the court or the Press Council. I didn't go for hammy things. My captions carried more information than their pictures.

Q. *Was the controversial* **Hindustan Times Sunday Weekly** *on Pakistan last November withdrawn for circulation after you had cleared it?*

A. I did not clear it as I was away in Paris. But I did find it objectionable. The introductory caption was unfortunate. It said that while the linguistic and religious minorities are always airing their grievances here, in Pakistan the minorities are happy. The comparison was odious.

Q. *What is the role of the newspaper in India?*

A. The role of the newspapers in this country is very limited. It is strictly a metropolitan phenomenon and even there it has a very restricted impact. Except that the ruling class comes from the newspaper reading section and therefore gives it much greater importance than it deserves.

Q. *Do you think that newspapers in India should play the role of the Opposition?*

A. I think it should play the role o the Opposition. The Government control the news agencies, the entire mass medi and all that. And if the press doesn't pre sent the Opposition point of view, which i doesn't, with the exception of the *India Express* and some others, who will?

Q. *How susceptible are Indian jou nalists to pressures?*

A. Enormously susceptible. It is m personal experience and of my own co leagues that bribery and corruption a there. One gets to know about it on when the report is slanted. There is dam all you can do about it.

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Fact: Being an enterprising Public Sector company, United India has the resources to attend to customer needs immediately. During 1981 we settled over 2,00,000 claims — averaging more than one a minute during normal working hours.

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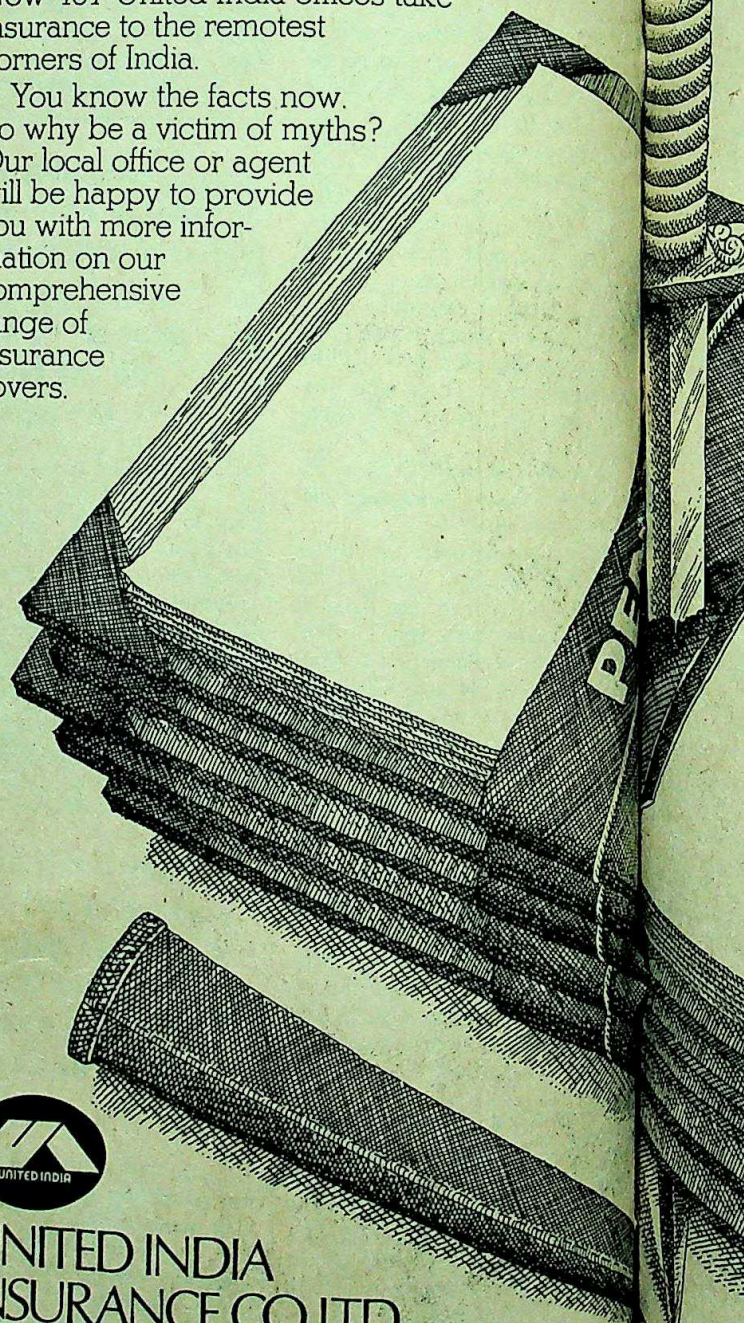

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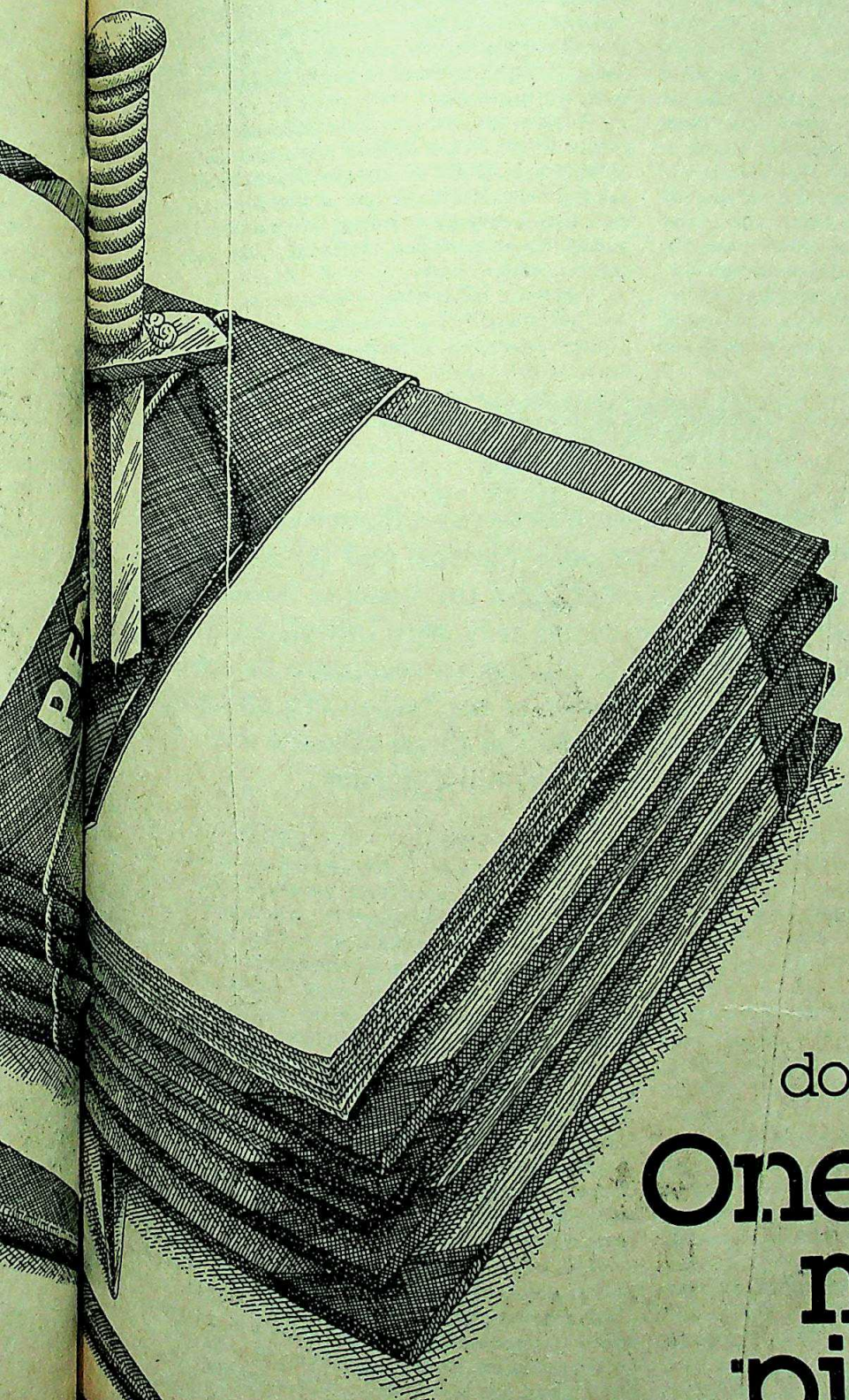

Every time we settle a claim double quick...

One more myth is pierced.

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THE COMMUNISTS

Ivan, Indira And India

INDIA may be the best friend of the Soviet Union in the Third World, but it is certainly not crowded with experts in Soviet affairs. Indeed, Sovietology—the art of reading and comprehending the fine print of Soviet writings—is still conspicuously lacking in this country. A sad example of this lag is the controversy manufactured in December over an article on India written by a well-known Soviet academic, Rostislav A. Ulyanovsky, and reproduced in two New Delhi weeklies, each of a broadly left orientation.

On December 26 the *Hindustan Times* carried an apparently inspired misinterpretation of the Ulyanovsky article which soon became its authorised annotation for the entire Indian press. The *Hindustan Times* report said: "The Soviet academician has told the CPI that its dreams of Left democratic unity are illusory." He also "advises the CPI (and, possibly, other Marxist and sundry Left parties) to form alliances with 'forces of social progress' (a euphemism for the Congress-I)".

Perceptive Article: Academician Ulyanovsky does nothing of the sort. His article, which appeared in the November-December issue of the Soviet journal *Asia And Africa Today*, attempts an analysis of the present Indian political situation and focusses a great deal on the Congress(I) and its leader, Indira Gandhi. Differing sharply from the CPI's perception of both, Ulyanovsky makes four points about the role of the Congress(I) and Indira Gandhi in the current phase of Indian politics.

First, the Congress(I) came back to power in 1980 winning the trust of the people, and, most important, that of the lower strata of the society". Two, the Congress(I) led by Indira Gandhi is struggling against "the Right-wing reactionary forces". Three, the Congress(I) is still 'a broad organisation with relative historic progressiveness which it, of course, uses to consolidate its popularity and well-deserved authority". And four, the personal charisma of Indira Gandhi and her qualities as an "outstanding stateswoman" still endow the Congress(I) with "some advantages stemming first of all from the national, anti-imperialist, peaceful aspirations of the Indian people".

This is the most fulsome praise for the Congress(I) to stem from a well-known Soviet personality since January 1980. Academician Ulyanovsky works for the Central Secretariat of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). As such, his views may be taken to reflect the thinking of at least a section of the Soviet party leadership. For that very reason his article has to be read and comprehended in its totality. It is not only wrong policy, but also extremely shortsighted and soapy publicity, to pick up certain sentences and phrases from the article to drive a wedge between the CPI and the CPSU. All the more so when this kind of wedge is neither relevant to Indian politics of the 1980s nor to pro-Soviet friendship.

Ulyanovsky makes it clear in his article that the Congress cannot revert to the situation obtaining in the 1950s and early 1960s, that is, in the Nehru era. This is because the "structure of political power" in India has "changed noticeably". Not only has there been a change of ruling parties at the Centre; the influence of the Opposition has increased; and coalition governments obtain in several states.

Analysis: Ulyanovsky observes that India is going through the "first stages" of developing a "classic multi-party, bourgeois political structure". This political structure is desired by "some strata of the national bourgeoisie and liberal big landlords as well as the growing kulak class". The "Right-wing reactionary forces" represent "a dangerous alternative to Congress(I) power at the national level." He regards these forces as the "chief menace", looming "ever larger on the political horizon".

Says Ulyanovsky: "One thing is beyond any doubt: India's development will take place in an atmosphere of tense political struggle and, to no mean extent, will depend on the mass movement, the activity of Left-wing, democratic, and progressive forces in that country." His advice to Indian politicians: "disunity between the democratic movement and forces of social progress" should be liquidated and there should be an alliance of these and similar forces against "the Right-wing danger".

At the same time, Ulyanovsky has grave doubts about certain trends and processes working with the Congress(I). "Many observers do not rule out tendencies toward greater concentration of power in the hands of one person. Influential circles of national capital are definitely striving for this. Proposals to amend the Constitution were made overtly on several occasions, and attempts were even made to win public support for such a move. Will the Congress resort to such a means of retaining power? Will it remain faithful to the democratic institutions established by Nehru? It seems to us that...there could be no genuine possibility for consolidating its authority other than turning to Nehru's socialist ideas, seeking to give them a realistic content through

The Ulyanovsky prescription—an alliance of the democratic movement (the Communist parties) and the forces of social progress (Indira Gandhi and the genuine Nehruites in her party)—can come about only with initiatives from both sides. The ruling party has to recapture the ideology and political fervour of the Nehru era and make its own contribution to an alliance with the Communist parties.

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...y of social progress in the interests of the Indian working ...ple who constitute the vast majority."

Prescription: It is clear, then, that the Ulyanovsky prescrip... — an alliance of the democratic movement (that is, the com...ist parties) and the forces of social progress (that is, Indira ...dhi and the genuine Nehruites in her party)—can come about ...y with initiatives from both sides. The ruling party has to ...ture the ideology and political fervour of the Nehru era and ...ke its own contribution to an alliance with the communist par... The Ulyanovsky recipe therefore resembles the Patriotic ...t concept put forward by Nikhil Chakravarty in his paper ...*stream* last summer after a visit to the Soviet Union. Neither ...el can be constructed at the initiative of the communist par... alone. It should be noted that the Patriotic Front concept ...ained a non-starter. No political party responded to it posi...ly. The *Mainstream* editor did not push it.

At no place in his article does Ulyanovsky advise the CPI to ...rn to its pre-Bhatinda political line of tailing the Congress(I). ...re is no indication whatsoever in the article that the CPI ...uld abandon its current tactical line of working in unison with ...e CPI-M for the strategic goal of a Left and democratic ...nt. There is an implication, however, that a union of the ...ocratic (that is, Left) forces and the "progressive ...ments" in the Congress(I) and other parties would be a ...nger and broader platform than a Left and democratic front.

THAT the Ulyanovsky article came out shortly before the state elections in Andhra Pradesh was a mere coincidence. ...e article was probably written shortly after ...me Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to the ...viet Union and it can be taken as CPSU's res...se to her complaint that the Left in India ...gang up with the Right to oppose her. ...decision to hold elections in Andhra Pra...h, Karnataka and Tripura on January 5 was ...ounced suddenly in December, taking even ...an political parties by surprise.

The Ulyanovsky article cannot by any ...ans be compared with the article carried on ...e front page of *Pravda* in 1957, on the eve of ...ctions in Andhra Pradesh, giving full marks ...the Congress Party of Jawaharlal Nehru not ...y for his peace-loving foreign policy but also for his prog...ive, socialist domestic policy. The Congress Party promptly ...d the article to inflict a crushing defeat on the united CPI, a ...eat from which the communist movement has still not re...vered in Andhra Pradesh. The Congress(I) managers of the ...dhra Pradesh election of January 1983 would have shuddered ...the idea of using the Ulyanovsky article against the com...ists.

Rajeshwar Rao: sharp criticism

Independent Line: It is somewhat intriguing that the CPI ...ral Secretariat should, nevertheless, have allowed itself to be ...oked by the *Hindustan Times* interpretation of the ...ovsky article to assert its "independence" of the Soviet ...mmunist Party. In a statement issued on December 27, the ...tral Secretariat said that "there is no international communist ...ding centre as in the days of the Communist International. ...ch party, as every other communist party, chalks out its own ...tical policy . . . We want to reiterate that our party stands ...the political line laid down at the 12th party congress held at ...anasi in April 1982".

This statement was issued soon after the return of CPI ...eral Secretary Rajeshwar Rao from Moscow, where he atten... the 60th anniversary celebrations of the Soviet state and met with leaders of the CPSU. INDIA TODAY learns from a senior CPI leader that Rao took up the Ulyanovsky article with them and was told that it had been printed without CPSU authorisation and did not represent the Soviet party's views on the CPI's relations with Congress(I). The CPSU leaders further told Rao that the CPI had to sculpt its own political line in accordance with its own Marxist-Leninist wisdom and experience. They said: "Sometimes our academics print articles in serious journals to express particular points of view."

Rao's declaration of the CPI's independence therefore does not mean "rebellion" against, or "betrayal" of, the CPSU. As if to confirm the close ties between the two parties, despite Rostislav Ulyanovsky, *Soviet Review*, a publication of the Soviet Embassy in New Delhi, carried in its December 30 issue Rao's speech at the main anniversary function in Moscow, giving it precedence over the message of greetings from Indian President Zail Singh. In that speech, Rao did not have a single word of praise for Indira Gandhi, not even for her foreign policy. On the CPI's part, *New Age* printed a savage editorial attack on the prime minister's domestic policies in its January 2 issue, along with the Central Secretariat's statement dismissing the Ulyanovsky article as the "personal opinion" of a Soviet academic.

Soviet Viewpoint: Those who are familiar with scholarly Soviet writings on India know that there has been almost an endless debate among Soviet academics on what may be expressed as the Indian situation. Only those writings are publicised—in English, at any rate—which broadly reflect state-to-state relations between the Soviet Union and India. Nearly 200 Soviet scholars are India specialists. While the majority of them work in academic institutions, a fairly large number work with the CPSU, the Soviet Foreign Ministry and the mass media.

Views on India which do not correspond with state-to-state relations are kept in reserve as it were, allowing Soviet leaders knowledge about India which is not necessarily used as an input of foreign policy. An American scholar, Richard Remnek, of North Carolina University, made a study in 1975 of interaction between Soviet scholarship and Soviet policy towards India. His main conclusion: By and large, serious Soviet scholarship on India remains at a certain remove from policy made and pursued by the Kremlin.

The Soviet leaders have high regard for Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. They also find positive remains of the Nehru era in the ruling Congress(I) party. But they have not so far praised Mrs Gandhi's domestic policies as 'progressive' since she came back to power in January 1980. The late Leonid Brezhnev had the highest praise for Mrs Gandhi's domestic policies in his report to the 25th Congress of the CPSU in 1976. He had none in his report to the 26th Congress of the CPSU held in February 1981, though he showered fulsome praise on Mrs Gandhi's "progressive and peace-loving" foreign policy.

The Ulyanovsky article does not indicate a fundamental change in the Soviet leaders' appreciation of the Congress(I) or its indomitable leader. It only prescribes a broad alliance of the Left, and democratic forces which would include many in the Congress(I), led by Indira Gandhi as well as the Left forces.

The recipe is unrealistic and will not be picked up by any political party. There is no indication at all that the Soviet leaders want the CPI to return to Indira Gandhi's parlour with a unilateral offer of cooperation. That, in any case, would be political suicide for the CPI. It would split the party, with the majority of the cadres either joining the CPI-M or working in closer unison with

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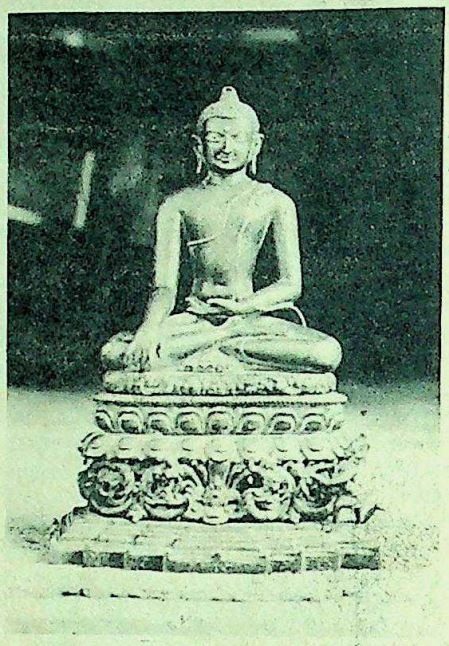
ANTIQUES

The Idol Runners

WITH the arrest of Ramji Sao last fortnight, the four-member special staff of the Central District Police led by Inspector G.L. Mahajan unearthed conclusive evidence of the existence of a well-organised antique smuggling gang from Bihar with European connections. Under constant police surveillance following prior information, the frail, thin and hungry looking Sao, 60, who could have easily passed off as an out-of-work labourer from Biharsharif whence he had come, was detained when his contact failed to turn up. From his possession were recovered a seven-inch-high 12th century bronze Buddha idol, a Ganesh and a Kartik idol, a World War II medal, and several photographs of other antique pieces.

Confirming the authenticity of the recovered idol, a team of five specialists led by Dr B. Mitra, director-general of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), identified it as one which had been stolen in a daylight robbery from the Bodhgaya Archaeological Museum. In the first robbery of its kind, four armed men entered the museum soon after it opened at 0945 hrs, removed five priceless ancient bronze idols at gunpoint, with an unarmed museum guard looking helplessly on, and vanished soon afterwards. Realising the seriousness of the crime, the Central Bureau of Investigation had circulated a special look-out notice for the stolen idols and the culprits. But over a year, the Buddha in *bhumisparsha mudra*, seated on a double petalled lotus pedestal, had simply disappeared.



The 12th century Buddha: priceless loot

Mahajan: successful

The ASI's valuation of the idol indicated its worth to be Rs 60,000. "But," said Dr K.K. Paul, chief of the Central District Police, "according to Sao, the price he negotiated in India was Rs 10 lakh, which would go up by the time it reached a buyer in Europe or America." He added: "In this case, we have recovered the most priceless of the five idols stolen a year ago."

Patient Method: According to the police, the modus operandi of the

SMUGGLING

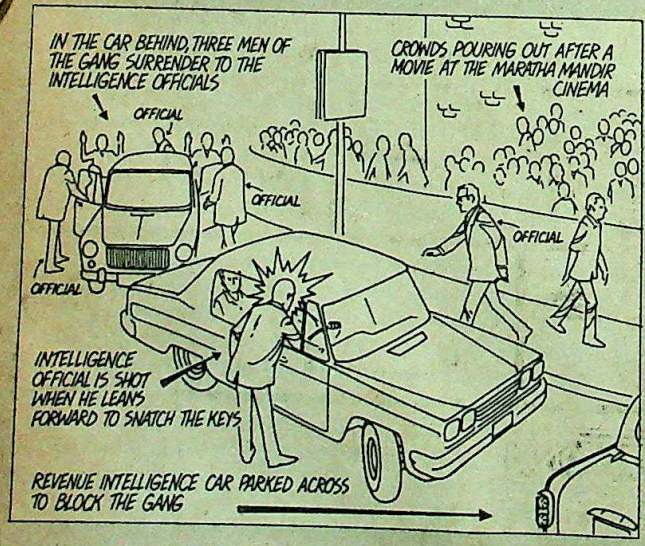
Gang Hunt

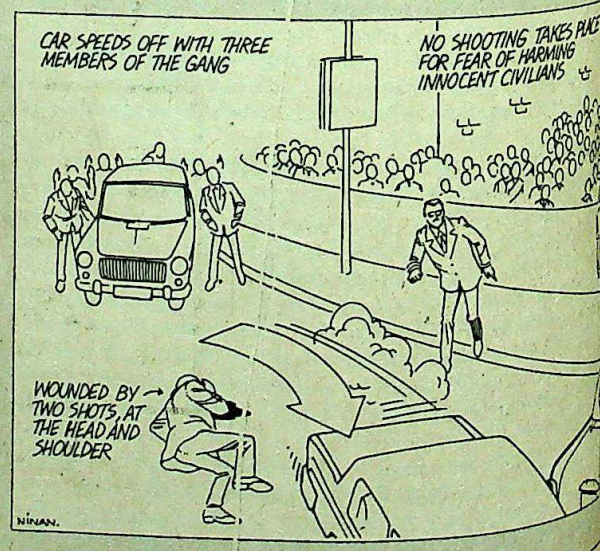
IN WHAT has caused a nation-wide manhunt, three youths in a white car, believed to be members of a smuggling gang, recently shot and wounded an official of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) at point-blank range outside Maratha Mandir cinema hall in the busy commercial district near Bombay Central Station.

In charge of the investigations for some time, the official, B.G. Iyengar, and his team were following up a nine-month-old lead on an international smuggling syndicate operating from Dubai.

Suspecting a rendezvous between a local gang and the syndicate, Iyengar and his team had stationed themselves outside the theatre on December 16. He sustained bullet injuries when he sought to intervene after apprehending the exchange of packets between two vehicles.

Taking advantage of the milling crowds outside the hall, the three gang members, one of whom was the suspected kingpin, made good their escape. Said Iyengar, 45, twice winner of the President's gold medal: "Although we were armed and could have opened fire, the crowds from the cinema show that had just got over stopped us from doing so. The smugglers were desperate to get away and were bound to have fired indiscriminately, which would have resulted in innocent people being killed."





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uglers had been worked out with great
e. After a theft, they would patiently
l till the hue and cry over the crime
d down. They would then dispatch their
tact men to Delhi with photographs of
stolen idols, where they would estab-
contact with prospective foreign
ers. These dealers would then study the
otographs, establish the period the idol
nged to and agree on the price. Only
r the price was settled, would the cou-
be sent with the goods.

Although ASI officials were jubilant
r the recovery of the idol, they were still
turbed by the unwillingness of countries
Europe and the Americas to sign the
CO covenant presented nearly nine
rs ago. This provided for the returning
antiquities to countries of their origin.
e non-signatories continue to fall back
the plea that the victimised nations can
back the valuables at prevailing
rket prices, if they so desire. However,
ASI officials validly point out, a buyer
uld hardly be willing to come forward
owing that he has stolen antiques in his
ssession. As the stalemate continues, the
reless heritage of various countries
ntinues to be ravaged with little hope of
itable solution.

—ASOKA RAINA

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G TAKES PLACE
HARMING
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The authorities, however, managed
rest the three men in the second
They were Mohammad Hassan,
l Abdul Rehman and Mohammad
—all Pakistani nationals. Also
nded from them were Rs 14 lakh
dian currency notes, believed to be
pay-off to their Indian counter-
. They revealed that they were
ting not only from Bombay but
of Delhi, Madras and Hyderabad.

Foreign Involvement: The large-
involvement of Pakistani nationals
dian smuggling networks surfaced
pril last year, when Customs Col-
r B.V. Kumar seized 7,000 tolas of
valued at Rs 1.4 crore at Ahmeda-
from Mohammed Akhtar Hussein
Qader Bhatti, 35, and his Indian
s Rekha Sheth, 18. Apart from
d, Gujarat Customs officials seized
gment of other contraband items,
,000 in currency notes and numerous
tickets in fictitious names. Bhatti's
was later traced to Pakistani syndi
operating from Dubai.

The police suspect that the three
uglers who managed to escape are
ally in Kathmandu. Said a DRI of-
: "It is only a question of time
re we dig them out. They cannot
d to stay underground for very

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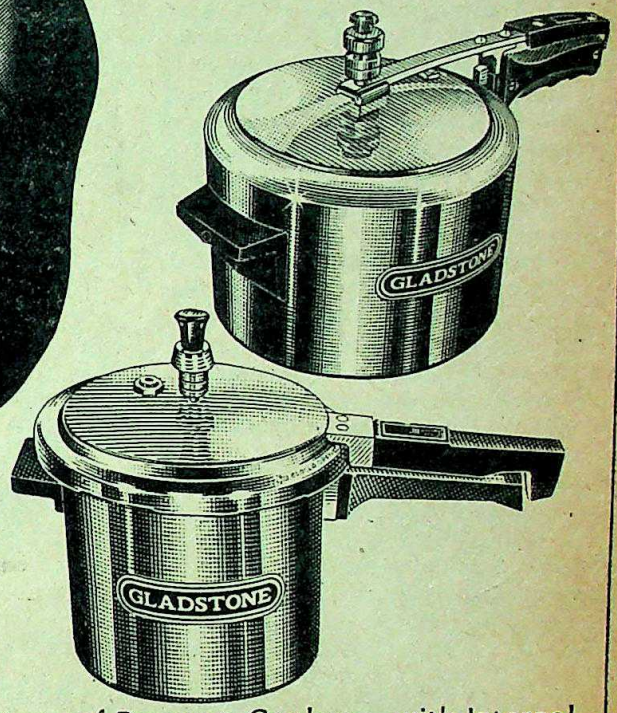

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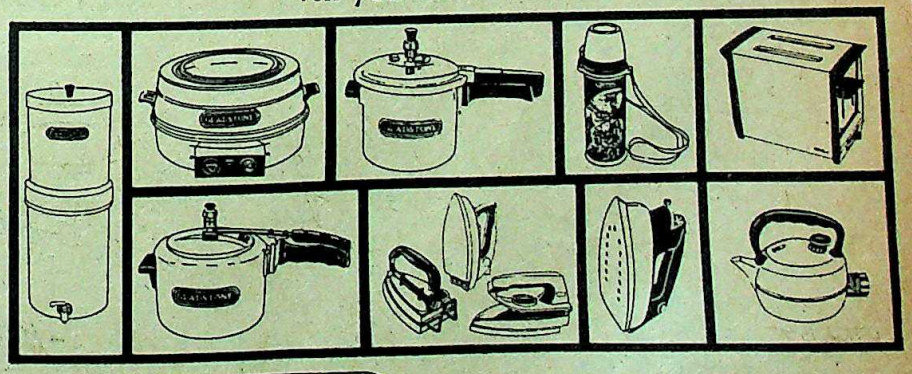

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CALCUTTA

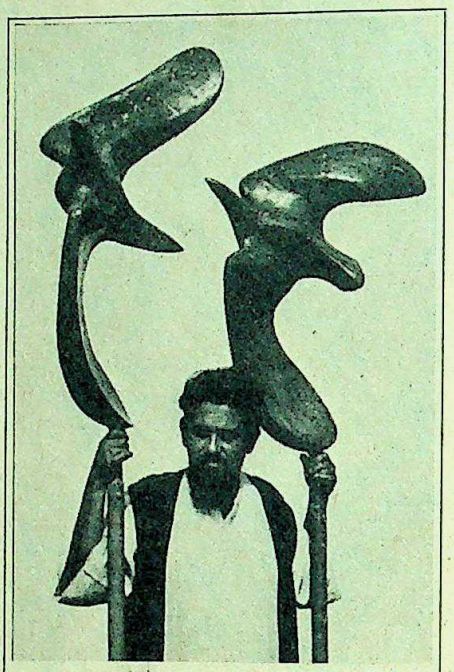
Birds Of Contention

IF AN artist is assigned a particular work, does he retain its copyright, or does he lose it as the cheque changes hands? Is an artist 'on commission' to be treated on par with any hack whose work can be recycled by his masters the way images are repeated in a two-way mirror?

There are two views on the subject, both of which are now being considered at the court of the metropolitan magistrate, Calcutta. The aggrieved artist is Sarbari Roy Chowdhury, renowned sculptor and reader in sculpture at Visva-Bharati in Shantiniketan; his adversary is Chloride India Limited, the Calcutta-based Indian battery giant which has technical collaboration with the Chloride Group Limited, UK. And the sculpture in question is a twin bronze bird, four feet high, a replica of which is gathering dust at Lalbazar, the headquarters of Calcutta Police. Roy Chowdhury got himself armed with a court injunction to prevent the replica from being shipped out of the country by Chloride India, thus scuttling the plan of the company to erect it at the Manchester offices of Chloride Technical Limited, an associated company of the Chloride Group.

The task of designing the 'Twin Soaring Birds' and erecting them at the Nazrul Islam Avenue offices of Chloride India's R&D department was assigned to Roy Chowdhury in 1977 for a price of Rs 40,000. However, at the small party held on the occasion of its unveiling, G.C. Cooper, the head of the Chloride Group's R&D outfit, was so enamoured of it that he offered to buy a replica of it for installation at the Manchester office. The decision, according to the versions of both Chloride India and Roy Chowdhury, was left at the bargaining stage.

Duplicate Cast: Roy Chowdhury said he wanted a re-negotiation since the duplicate copy was being installed abroad, and "though I did not mention a fixed sum, I certainly had at the back of my mind the high prices Indian sculptors are now asking and getting for their works abroad". Chloride India, equally reticent to name the price it would have paid to Roy Chowdhury, however, went ahead with its plan to take out a replica from the plaster mould created for making the original impression. Nikhil Barat, Chloride India's donnish erstwhile R&D chief, paid Rs 22,000 to Jiten Das, the caster who had helped Roy Chowdhury sculpt the birds, and got the replica out.



"The birds may not be the greatest I have sculpted, but they are mine; no *batterywalla* can appropriate it without my consent."

—Sarbari Roy Chowdhury

Roy Chowdhury maintains that this was done without his knowledge. In a criminal suit filed later, he included Das in the list of accused persons, together with Cooper, Barat, Samir Basu, deputy managing director of Chloride India and Jahar Sengupta, the company's high profile managing director.

Meanwhile, the company began arrangements for shipping out the replica through a private freight agent, Shipping and Clearing Agents Private Limited. Roy Chowdhury promptly moved the court and got the shipping stayed, with the replica finally finding its place in the grimy innards of Lalbazar.

The bird of contention, however, is not an earth-shattering piece of creation by Roy Chowdhury who, at 49, is considered to have peaked out. Some of his more interesting early works now adorn fabled collection of Henry Moore. 'Twin Soaring Birds' are quite strai design, and are meant to represe company's R&D unit's ideal of "a spirit of cooperation". Said a sculpto longing to Roy Chowdhury's peer gr "The birds are actually quite prosai would not have attracted so much tention but for the hue and cry over pyright."

Stiff Reply: Last fortnight, Chowdhury added a new turn to the by filing a lengthy reply before the to Chloride India's plaint, saying the dispute could not be treated as "of nature", and that the "illegal act" of ringing the copyright of the art wer "punishable under law". Said Chowdhury to INDIA TODAY: "This tic company thinks it can browbeat artist, or at least wear him out in a battle where it has all the resources this is a fight for principles. If Chl India can have its way, foreign companies will have a perfect precede rob Indian artists."

Roy Chowdhury's rhetorical bursts apart, the issue really rests tricky interpretation of the Copyright Act, 1957, which states th author of a work of art shall be "th owner of the copyright therein" except the case of a work made in the cour the author's employment under a con of service or apprenticeship". In circumstance, "in the absence of agreement to the contrary, (the emp shall be the first owner of the cop therein".

Sengupta refused to elaborate o line of his company's legal strategy, said that the cast and the mould, with the copyright, "belong inco vertibly to us". He said legal opinion sought "at every stage" of the com handling of the affair, "including th of getting a replica made". Since matter is in court, Chloride spokesm unwilling to say any more, but the will rest on an interpretation of the C right Act. Fulminated Roy Chowdhu "The birds may not be the greatest I sculpted, but they are mine; batterywalla can appropriate it withou consent." Sengupta coolly counterp "We shall win the case, after that the birds into the dustbin. After so of bitterness, we don't want to p them."

Still, the first impression, symbol a very bizarre "soaring spirit of co ation", remain perched at Chloride R&D office, with no sign of Sen attempting to stone the first cast.

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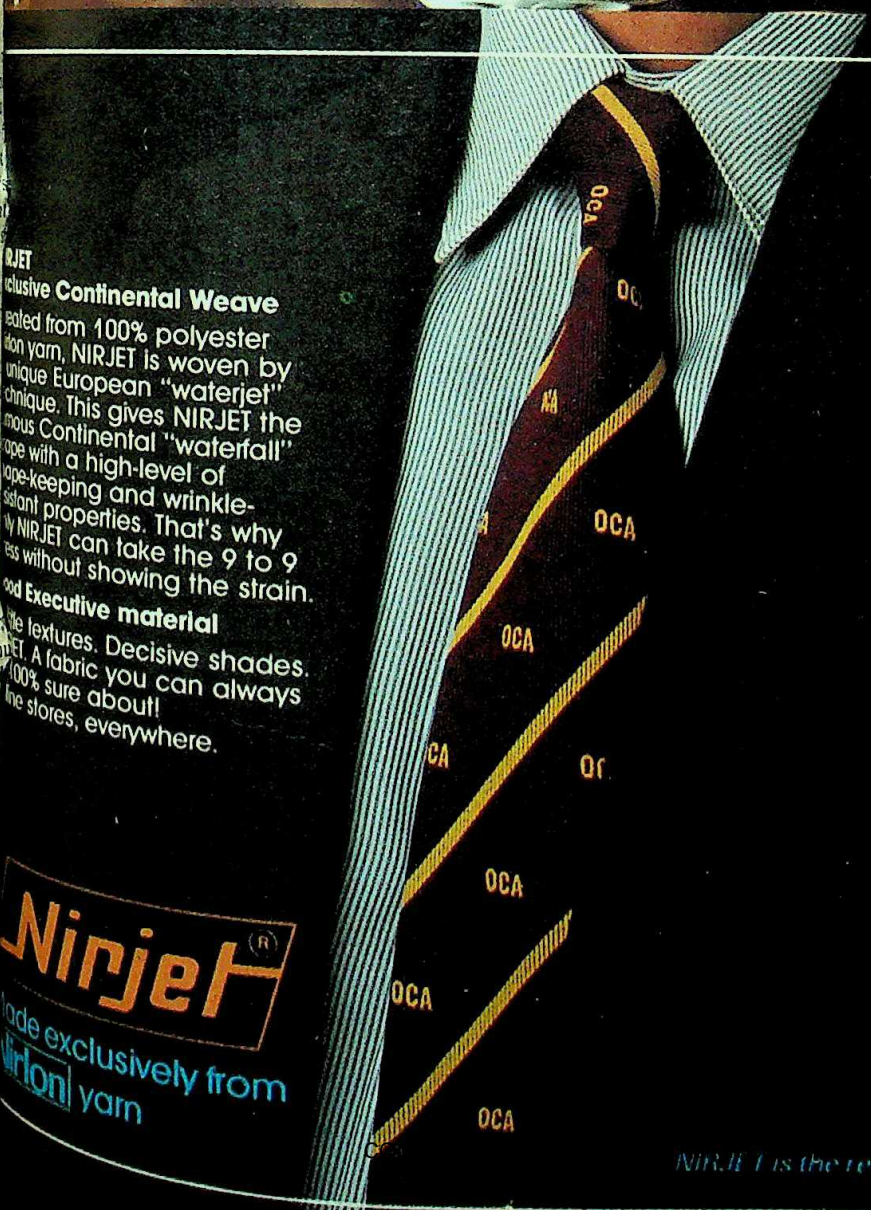

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Architecture is not the only monumental reason for visiting Rajasthan

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A place where the lure of historic grandeur is offset by a land so harsh, that the beauty of filigreed architecture only seems to hover on the edge of a vast collage.

The Delwara temples at Mt. Abu, and Ranakpur, the mystic glen of Jain temples in the Aravalli hills, where every concievable surface of every temple is carved and engraved.

Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Bikaner. Burnt gold of forts rise imposingly in the lonely desert. And the cluster of havelis with their breathtaking lattice work awe you with their intricacy.

Architecture so exquisite, it seems unfair only queens could live there. And now nobody does. But architecture is not the only prism in this sunburst land. Wayside shops heaped with softly glowing pottery, richly carved jewellery, tumbled heaps of gay fabrics, hand-painted, to entice you to reach out and touch.

Legends of chivalry, tales of love and devotion, songs that speak of pride and courage, fairs that invoke deities, festivals that pulse with colour.

And the people sway past imposing in their demeanour, but warm and beautiful and gentle at heart.

Rajasthan. It has reverberations of ancient splendour.

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A tribal victim in hospital: cruel treatment

reaking The Chains

THE state ruled by Jagannath Mishra, civil rights usually take a beat-g. Last month, however, the Patna Court gave a judgement that translato a major victory for civil rights ac-. It decreed that no undertrial in the was to be put in handcuffs or fetters circumstances compelled the autho-to do so. In a pointed order, the said: "We believe that the state will it that its police remembers these while dealing with undertrial priso-The ruling came at the end of a and passionate battle fought by-old lawyer Ravishanker Prasad, ary of the Bihar unit of the People's for Civil Liberties (PUCL), who took udgels on behalf of two tribals lying spital with their legs chained to their with handcuffs.

According to Prasad, tribals of Pah-block in Santhal Parganas were agi-for food in October when the police on them. Newspapers splashed the graphs on their front pages and that how he came to know of the sad of Shyam Lal Tudu and Rungta cruelly fettered to hospital beds. behalf of the PUCL, Prasad filed a writ tion in the high court seeking an to take away the handcuffs. Cop-quoting Supreme Court rulings the lawyer argued that unless there compulsive need to fetter an under-it was "arbitrary, capricious, sadistic inhuman" to do so. He added: "It inconceivable that tribals who were ting for their life after being shot wounded would make any attempt for e."

Court Orders: The crusade, as Prasad it, proceeded in instalments. First, es C.N. Tiwari and C.S. Sinha order-e removal of the handcuffs and di-the state to get detailed instructions in this matter as there might have been compelling reasons for this action. Later, Justices Syed Ali Ahmed and B.P. Griyaghey took a firm stand and sought an explanation from the administration. Finally, Justices B.P. Sinha and R.B. Singh issued the blanket order covering all undertrials. Says a jubilant Prasad: "We have succeeded in getting a definite direction regarding handcuffing from the court, to be followed in the entire state."

The order will be quite some relief to citizens in Bihar—among them lawyers of

Prasad (left) and Jain: crusaders

the high court and a Ranchi journalist, according to Prasad—who suffer indignities at the hands of callous policemen. But the fetters are only part of the gloomy civil rights picture in Bihar: at the moment Prasad is arguing the case of undertrials Master Dome and Baban Mahto who have been in Arrah jails for years.

The PUCL activist's struggle has been matched by the efforts of another young lawyer, Kamlesh Jain, who without the resources of an organisation like the PUCL has also been single-handedly battling for the freedom of prisoners thrown into gloomy dungeons and then conveniently forgotten. Last month, the press detailed Jain's tenacious fight for the freedom of deaf-and-dumb Boka Thakur, lodged in Madhubani jail since 1945 on a charge of murder. She also took up the case of Rudal Sah, in Muzaffarpur jail for over 30 years although he had been acquitted of murder in 1967.

Jain heard of Thakur's plight and filed a writ for habeas corpus in April 1982 in the high court. However, the court rejected the writ, ruling that she was not the aggrieved party and was not related to Thakur. Jain then sent her younger brother Chandan Jain, a student, to Madhubani, to secure a *vakalatnama* so that a fresh case could be filed. But the jailor reportedly refused to help Chandan. Help came in the person of V.N. Sinha, a lawyer who volunteered to travel to Madhubani; soon, a fresh petition was filed on behalf of Chandan and two others.

Incomplete Victory: The petition sought Thakur's release and his rehabilitation. While the legal jousting was on, the Government agreed to set Thakur free and the case was withdrawn. This was a half-victory for the young lawyer as the court had not addressed itself to her basic point —Thakur's rehabilitation as he had been wrongfully confined. A grateful Thakur thanked Jain. Says Jain: "That was the greatest fee that I could ever earn."

The case was only the beginning for Jain. She teamed up with Chandan to take up Rudal Sah's case. Chandan filed the writ, Jain argued—and Sah was released. However, Jain had to endure the acid remark of a judge who said that she was doing all this because she was publicity-hungry. Once again, it was an incomplete victory as the court did not issue an order for rehabilitation costs.

Nevertheless, Jain is continuing with her efforts to rehabilitate Sah. She is also determined to carry on with her legal struggle for the rights of other Thakurs and Sahs. For both Jain and Prasad, taking up arms on behalf of the helpless, voiceless poor has become a passion.

—FARZAND AHMED

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this Annual General Meeting of your Company. It is with regret that I have to report that the profits of this year have not been as good as last year's; of course, last year's were record profits. The sales have continued to show an upward trend and were better than the last year's mark. Your Directors have recommended to maintain the dividend at 15 per cent on equity share capital. You would be pleased to know that 32.62% of the dividend will be exempt in the hands of the shareholders, under Section 80K of the Income-tax Act, 1961.

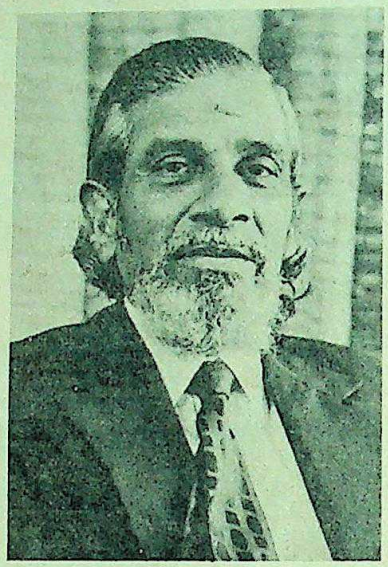
Recession Paradox

The performance of any company is naturally conditioned by the environment, in which it operates. Last year, Indian industry was overtaken by recession and a number of enterprises suddenly found themselves confronted with a fall in demand, rising costs and increase in stocks, and eventually were forced to cut down production. Commercial vehicles and tractors, automobile tyres and domestic refrigerators, electrical appliances, paper and textiles were some of the industries, which came directly under the spell of recession. Major company operations like textiles and Units in Kota were affected not only by recession, but also by severe power cuts.

We are not the only country, which has been invaded by recessionary forces. As a matter of fact, in the last two years almost all the industrialised countries have been facing recession and have been saddled with excess capacity. We have been saved so far, partly because our economy is somewhat insulated from such international trends, and partly because growth to us is a compelling necessity. It is paradoxical that a developing country like ours should suffer from lack of demand. There is something wrong somewhere, which has disturbed the equilibrium and forced industry to move backward instead of going forward. What has really gone wrong?

New Strategy for Agriculture

The obvious fact is that our agricultural production received a rather severe jolt with the failure of monsoons. The kharif crop would be short by 7 to 8 million tonnes and the total foodgrains production in the current



Dr. Bharat Ram

year may drop by more than 6 per cent, even if the rabi is normal. Indeed, I get a feeling that our agriculture has lost the dynamism, which was imparted by the 'green revolution' in the mid-sixties. We seem to have reached a stage, where our agricultural production has become static between 128 to 134 million tonnes. In fact, even the consumption of fertilisers, which is an important factor for increasing agricultural production, is not growing at the necessary rate. A growing agricultural output is necessary, not only to feed our population adequately, but to give a push to the industrial sector. Studies reveal that to achieve a 8 per cent growth rate in industry, it is necessary that agricultural production grows by 4 per cent per year. This parity between sectors is vital and, when it is upset, it has its serious ramifications.

Fallacies of Demand Management

Equally responsible is the kickback from the policy approaches. Prices were rising rather sharply since April, 1979 and by August, 1981 had more or less stabilised. However, the inflation psychosis induced the Government to hold on to the measures, which were aimed at demand management. Credit was controlled, tax rates were jacked up, money supply expansion was curbed, and interest rates were raised . All this was done to check demand and bring it in line with production. I believe, firstly, that demand management was not the right means, and secondly, that it has been continued far beyond the relevant period. It may be a measure to be tried in industrialised countries, where consumerism had been instrumental in bloating demand and pushing up the level of prices. But in a country like ours, where the whole objective is to enable people earn more with a view to consume more and improve the standard of living, demand management does not really fit. Rather, it should be, the endeavour of the Government and indeed of the business, the labour and the farmer to see that production is increased to match the rising expectations of the people. A balance between demand and supply brought about through increase in production is a far more desirable goal, than the easy option of demand management.

Causes of Recession

I am aware that the present industrial situation cannot be adequately described by a single phenomenon like recession. There are many other factors in operation, which have made the problem a little complex. For instance, there have been excessive imports which can be described as dumping, following our liberalised import policy and the recession abroad. Power shortage continues in most of the States and has even accentuated in places like Rajasthan. Our foreign exchange earnings have not increased, and the reserves have come down to an alarming low level. Industrial relations are disturbing and have taken a gigantic form in Bombay.

Need for Second Phase of Industrial Revolution

We have to view these trends in the perspective of the development set out in the Sixth Five Year Plan. It was hoped that the average rate of growth of industrial production would be little over 8 per cent. It was of the opinion at that time that even this growth was small in comparison with both our needs as also potentialities. However, looking at the trends that have emerged, it appears that even the targets set out by the Planning Commission would be difficult to achieve.

On the contrary, a high level of development has become absolutely essential today. Indeed, the circumstances are such that we can usher in what I think is the second phase of the industrial revolution in our country. To make it feasible, we have to

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eech by Dr. Bharat Ram, Chairman, the Annual General Meeting of the Company ld on December 28, 1982 at Delhi.

gure ourselves in advance. As I said ter, we have to evolve a new strategy for culture, which will ensure that duction growth is continuously tained. Infrastructure like Power and nsport have to keep a step ahead of nand. We have abundant supplies of the ventional sources of energy like coal, and Government, even at the cost of other jects, should concentrate its resources and tion on the completion of power jects and their efficient management. ally important, the policy environment to be made conducive to larger vestment. Let us not forget that without h growth, no socio-economic objective, ever vital and crucial, can be achieved.

ssentials of Industrial velopment

Our industrial development in the fifties d sixties was largely guided by import substitution. This strategy has certainly paid dends. Our industrial base was diversified a number of new products came to be nufactured. But a programme of elopment, which is aimed essentially at efficiency, often becomes uneconomic, n pushed beyond a limit. This is what pened in the past two decades. In many ors of industry, the techniques of duction are not modern, the cost of duction is high, the quality of goods is , and the rate of growth is low. These ustries find it difficult, inspite of lower ges, to withstand competition from other ntries. This realisation itself has been the ivation for the Government to create ities for export and to help industry to dertise. Nevertheless, export should not st obligation; export must pay. Unless we form our industry technologically, e a level of efficiency compared to that r countries, put up enterprises of a hich help reduce cost, we may not be n make any dent in the international ket, inspite of the tremendous advantages process, in terms of our vast natural ources and equally large manpower. But it is not easy to keep modern nology updated. In fact, most industries d difficult even to replace assets, because placement cost is far above the historical e, which forms the basic of depreciation ance. Exposed to high rate of corporate ation, there are no surpluses either, which be used to supplement depreciation ve. It is necessary that the Government consider this peculiar problem, created by rise in equipment prices, and devise a system of inflation accounting in the sphere of depreciation.

Development does not just happen. It has to be induced. And, it can be induced only, when different partners share their responsibilities. The Government has to ensure that a continuous harmony is established between demand and supply, and adjust fiscal and monetary policy accordingly. Management and labour, have to ensure that industry operates in the most efficient manner. I am aware that many managements have not measured up to these standards. I would also say that many trade unions have not realised their partnership role in industrial development. These are not mere matters of education, they call for introspection, discipline and the social ethos, which is the unseen energy in progress.

Putting Economy on its Rails; Points to Ponder

The next Budget would be an occasion for the Government to take an overall view of the economy, and initiate policy measures, which would facilitate high and balanced growth. In brief, I would like to mention that, to bring about a harmony in development, which at present is rather disturbed, the following specific measures are called for:

- *To stimulate demand, it is necessary that prices are brought down. This is possible only through reduction in the rate of excise duties in respect of products, where a demand supply gap has emerged. Afterall, the Government can earn higher revenues, if there is larger production even with a lower rate of taxation.*

- *Equally important is the need to reduce the rate of interest, which, in respect of bank credit, has reached 19.5 per cent. Most industrialised countries have brought down their interest rates precisely to overcome recessionary forces. Monetary mechanism is supposed to have the advantage of flexibility and quick adjustment. In our country, interest rates never seem to be coming down, once they are raised. It is of utmost importance today that interest rates are reduced.*

- *The method of calculating depreciation needs to be changed to take account of increase in capital costs.*

- *It is also necessary that the company and personal taxation be brought down. In fact, this view was expressed in the Parliament by the then Union Finance Minister, Shri R. Venkataraman while in debate on the Budget for 1981–82.*

- *The Government must review its import policy taking into account the capacity existing within the country.*

  The anti-dumping legislation has already been introduced and its provisions need to be made operative. This devolves responsibility on industry as well. It should not take advantage of the situation to raise prices, which, in some cases, had led the Government to use imports as a countervailing mechanism.

Even if some of these measures in the short run lead to deficit financing, in my opinion, in the long run, the measures I have suggested would increase the revenue of the Government. In the short run, because of power constraints, the Government should consider postponing some of the capital expenditure, because without adequate power supply capital expenditure is a waste.

I hope the Government will give due consideration to some of these suggestions.

The revival of the economy, to which I have addressed myself may create apprehension in the minds of those, who have been excessively concerned with the rise of prices. We have undoubtedly succeeded in holding the price line. It is not a matter of surprise that, inspite of the shortfall in Kharif output, prices have dropped since August. This, in my view, is an indication of how severe demand management has been, and how strong reversal measures the Government should take.

Before I close, I would like to thank all our workers and staff for the hard work and devotion they have evinced, and which has helped our Company perform better inspite of the uncongenial industrial environment.

Note: This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

DCM

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MAHARASHTRA

A Flourishing Racket

THEY were meant, in the words of Maharashtra's colourful former chief minister A.R. Antulay, to benefit "the weakest and the destitute sections of society, which are forgotten by every other political party". However, the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Anudan Yojana—a monthly pension scheme for destitutes—and the Sanjay Gandhi Swavalamban Yojana—a small loans programme—launched with much fanfare a little over two years ago have become flourishing rackets in the hands of ruling party politicians and workers.

A test check by state Accountant General Y.S. Das of Swavalamban loan cases picked at random from 17 tehsils in six districts revealed that 7,215 loans totalling Rs 33.96 lakh were not even recorded in the minute books of the allotting committees. Since no records of their applications or sanctions were found, they had presumably been given to untraceable or fictitious persons.

As for the Niradhar Yojana, officials in Pune district made a survey in the wake of the accountant general's Swavalamban check, and tehsildars in the district's 14 tehsils have already discovered and terminated fraudulent payments to 2,502 persons, involving an outlay of Rs 18 lakh. If the extent of misappropriation for both schemes is typical, then, from October 2, 1980 when they were launched, to September 30, 1982, an estimated Rs 15 crore has been fraudulently drained from the state exchequer.

Helping Hand: The Swavalamban scheme, with a yearly budget of Rs 5 crore breaks out of the rigid tradition of secured loans and allows educated unemployed and underemployed to draw up to Rs 2,500 as interest-free advance to start small businesses and service industries and set up as cobblers, tailors, fruit and vegetable merchants, *raddi* merchants and so on. The Niradhar Yojana, with a yearly budget of Rs 15 crore, offers a small monthly dole of Rs 60 to the aged—men over 65 and women over 60—the handicapped and the mentally retarded if they have no earning children or other support. Non-official committees, consisting of partymen in each of the state's 396 tehsils, were created by government resolution No. SLS 1080/72551/IND-2, dated September 20, 1980, to handle the allotment of loans and pensions.

Implemented properly, both schemes could have been a boon for the poor. But as they turned out, both rapidly became a part of Antulay's patronage which won him instant popularity among Maharashtra Congressmen: the notorious former chief minister arranged the nomination of tehsil-wise committee members from among legislators and unelected partymen, many of whom could not be found berths elsewhere. In Pune, for example, seven of the district's tehsil committees were headed by partymen who had been defeated in the May 1980 poll, and two others by ... tors who held no other office.

Antulay with Sanjay in 1980: cashing in on a name

The Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Anudan Yojana —a monthly pension scheme for destitutes—and the Sanjay Gandhi Swavalamban Yojana—a small loans programme—launched with much fanfare a little over two years ago have become flourishing rackets in the hands ruling party politicians and workers.

All powers of disbursement were centrated in these allotment com... with no administrative checks or ... to prevent misappropriation. Ex... R.N. Chinmulgund, Aurangabad ... collector: "Tehsildars and other ... ment servants have no influence ... non-official committees' decision... cause all powers are with the co... tees and ultimately they are acc... ble to no one, not even to the G... ment. As a result, there have ... number of complaints of com... members favouring their kith a... and ignoring the norms and gui... for allotment of loans and pensio...

Damning Report: This freeb... it happened, was a green sig... loot. By the end of 1981, compla... corruption, misappropriation a... regular allocation poured in a... mid-1982 B.A. Bhosale's Gove... was finally forced to sit up an... note. Last July, the accountant ... made his test check of the S... lamban Yojana and uncovered ... despread irregularity. Outright ... propriation could run to several ... of the Rs 11.46 crore disbursed ... the Swavalamban Yojana since ... ception.

The Bhosale Government w... aware of the implicat... these revelations an... report was kept closely ... wraps after it was sent ... Department of Housi... Special Assistance i... 1982. Das, in fact, ... that he conducted the ... but government fil... SGY-1082 in the Mini... Housing and Special Ass... ce makes frequent refere... his July 1982 note on ... gular allotments.

The note lists a s... other irregularities, all ... stemming from the committees' ... powers. Tehsildars and other adm... ve staff were included as secretaries ... committees, but had only a reco... tory role. Says a senior governm... cial who has dealt with both S... "The main problem has been that ... strators have no say whatsoever, ... allotment committees can get a...

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ds of irregularities. The accountant has found cases of loans given wi- sanctions, sanctions made by people are not competent to allot loans, and mber of instances where people have d the interest-free loans to them- and their family members."

Massive Fiddle: The sample probe d only a tiny proportion of the 2.47 loans sanctioned and disbursed, but turned up a surprising number of irities. In many cases loans were d to more than one person in the family, and in others more than one was given to the same person. r, although the scheme prescribed a procedure which called for the atten- and signatures of all five members ch committee, investigations in abad, Bombay, Nagpur and Shola- Districts showed that in numerous sanctions and disbursements were before the formation of committees. Pune sanctions were made without mittee meeting.

r example, some 17 ap- s in Bombay were given 000 before their applica- were formally approved. in a large number of ven the prescribed bond ure repayment of the ed loans had not been which points to collu- etween the committees the administrators in of the final disburse- and could make it im- le for government agen- to recover the loans, carry no security from the bonds. In other cases, in- e bonds lacking the signature of ts were accepted by tehsildars.

h a number of cases, committee ers in several tehsils blithely sanc- loans to themselves, their family s, relatives and friends, ignoring the chronological order of applica- d the applicant's eligibility. The mban rules clearly state that only oyed persons registered with em- nt exchanges or the Employment tee Scheme, landless labourers, farmers and underemployed persons gible for loans and priority within categories "should be given to those e families there is not a single ear- mber with regular employment".

Unjust Allotments: But INDIA TODAY's gations reveal that while applica- by underemployed landless labourers e's Purandhar tehsil were still to be ned, at least two relatively well-off tee members. M.M. Jagtap and E.K. Nakade, had allotted loans to themselves. But Sivalinga Hariba Kamle, a landless Harijan who on October 9, 1980 applied for a loan to start a cobbler's shop, only a week after the Yojana's launching—receipt No. 9246—is still running a pitiably under-stocked roadside *mochi* outfit. Elsewhere, 60 fraudulent cases in Ambegaon taluka and five in Pune have already come to light, although a proper study of loans is yet to be under taken.

Admits Maruti Abnavi, an influential cobbler from Purandhar's Sewree village, a Harijan supporter of the Congress(I) and allotment committee member: "All the money from the Swavalamban and Niradhar schemes is going to the members' families and relatives, and not more than 30 paise in the rupee reaches really deserving cases. I have suggested to the collector's office that the entire allotment committee be disbanded rather than allow the scheme to be so misused."

The corruption is staggering. In Jalgaon district's Bhadgaon-Petha tehsil, a single family received 12 separate loans. In Aurangabad more than 50,000 applications were pending while committee members violated the order of application and sanctioned loans to 6,788 favoured persons. Although verification of specific cases is still to take place, Aurangabad District Collector Chinmulgund admits that many Swavalamban allotments are probably irregular.

In Ahmednagar, two committee members from Parner taluka sanctioned loans to family members and friends, and last fortnight District Collector Anil Kumar Lakhina called for an explanation. Said Lakhina: "We have not been able to formulate cast-iron procedures for the implementation of this scheme yet, so you have a number of malpractices. But it is an extremely good scheme which will eventually stabilise into a wonderful lending instrument for the poor who cannot afford to give security and pay commercial interest."

If the extent of misappropriation for both schemes is typical, then, from October 2, 1980 when they were launched, to September 30, 1982, an estimated Rs 15 crore has been fraudulently drained from the state exchequer.

ALTHOUGH the accountant general is still to examine pension allotments under the Niradhar Yojana, the situation there seems little better. Twisted in a manner identical to the Swavalamban scheme by the very committees which oversaw the loan allotments, the dole has been misappropriated, given to persons under the prescribed age limit—and, incredibly, allotted to as many rich land-owning families as destitutes. Said Abnavi: "I know of numerous cases where rich people receive five or six pension cheques every month, while poor widows who applied two years ago are still waiting."

Government officials in Bombay insisted last fortnight that the Niradhar Yojana was not subject to the same irregularities as the loan scheme, but investigations prove otherwise. Officials in Pune district have already discovered a significant level of misappropriation from the pension funds, particularly in the urban constituencies of Pune City, Haveli and Daundh. Of the 12,720 pension applications approved in Pune alone, a random check on 3,000 has thrown up almost 1,000 irregular allotments, a large number of these fraudulently given to committee members themselves.

Committee Disbanded: In fact, all five members of Pune city's Shivajinagar committee—including city Congress(I) President Shalinitai Rane—were found to have routed both pensions and loans to friends and relations and the Government was forced to disband the committee. Said one tehsildar: "The city corporators on the committees refuse to follow the serial order of application or the other rules. And even though the Government two months ago ordered that all applications must be considered chronologically, they do not do this because then they cannot win favour with their constituents or indulge in these malpractices." This comment sums up the loopholes that can be exploited by members to meet their own ends.

Members of the disbanded committee insist that the irregularities were not motivated by corruption. Dr B.D. Bhujbal, who along with Rane was accused of engineering a number of misappropriations, argued that it was the applicants who lied about their financial status, saying that because of the lack of the

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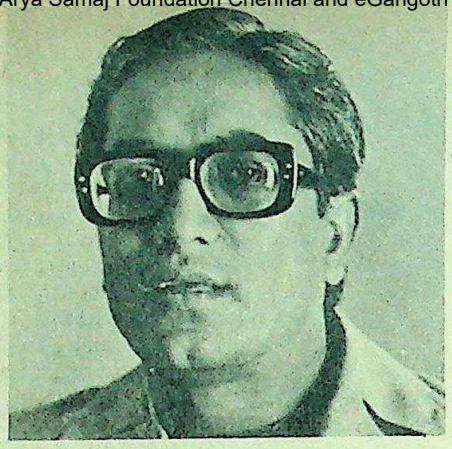
necessary machinery it was impossible to check the applicants' credentials. Said Bhujbal: "In the case of Shalinitai Rane's relatives who got the loans, we knew they were her relatives but we had no way of checking out whether their economic condition was good or bad, so we passed them. This is exactly what happened with the other irregular allotments too."

Widespread Corruption: The virus rages with equal intensity in Pune's rural constituencies. A study of about 400 pensions in Purandhar taluka turned up 186 irregular allotments, over 46 per cent of the total. Investigations by INDIA TODAY in Dhule, Aurangabad and Ahmednagar revealed misappropriation which was only a little less frequent, though equally alarm-



Bhujbal: irregular allotments

ing. In Aurangabad tehsil's rural tuency 149 Niradhar pensions invo annual expenditure of Rs 1.07 lak been cancelled already, and check inues. Of 4,821 pension grants sa in the entire constituency, only 1,5 now disbursed as the rest are being ted to minute scrutiny, which has resulted in many cancellations on of irregular allotment.

Over 100 Niradhar pension ca terminated in Ahmednagar's Kop tehsil after investigations by the c and tehsildar resulted in revelations allotment. Says Ahmednagar Distr lector Lakhina: "But the political res in such schemes are so great local MLA, Shankarrao Kolhe, w

EGS

Model Of Corruption

MAHARASHTRA has pioneered a string of schemes which aim at giving work to the unemployed. All too often, however, the programmes are perverted by politicians and administrators out for a fast buck. One such casualty appears to be the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), an ambitious rural employment programme with an annual budget of Rs 120 crore that can theoretically generate over 24 crore mandays, but has become a hotbed of corruption and was labelled as such in a heated Assembly debate last month.

Separate investigations by Dhule district's former collector Arun Bhatia, a legislative committee led by Republican Party of India leader R.S. Gavai and a private anti-corruption vigilance committee suggest substantial fraud. No state-wide estimates are available, but the official surveys in Dhule unearthed fraud in a minimum of 13 per cent of the works, and the vigilance committee more recently found that over 50 per cent of the funds for major works around Dhule township had been fraudulently misappropriated. Argues Gavai: "There is no doubt that malpractices and corruption are taking place on a very large scale in the Employment Guarantee Scheme."

Fraudulent Methods: Started 11 years ago by the V.P. Naik ministry, the EGS offers guaranteed employment to any group of 50 people anywhere in the state who apply to the Government for work, and a statutory dole if that work is not provided within 15 days. Supervised by district collectors, the EGS is actually implemented by zilla parishads and the irrigation, forest, soil conservation, public works and building and construction departments. The work gangs toil on minor public works, irrigation bunds and ditches, tree planting and soil conservation jobs.

That is all very well, but when it comes to payment, the inevitable happens. As a vast majority of the rural unemployed is illiterate, few are aware

Bhatia: investigative zeal

of the figures on the pay receipts on which they apply their thumbs, or the number of days they have been shown on the job. Thus most rolls can be manipulated to show imaginary payments obtained by false thumb-prints, absent worker's names added to prove fictitious work. Work registers and paybills are maintained with the departments concerned and weekly payments made by junior engineers and officers—the same engineers ultimately assess the work and can easily falsify records to show that the job has been completed, thus neatly tying up loose ends.

The first sign that all was not with the EGS came in 1981 when Bh made a detailed verification of 315 the 44,492 paybills issued in Dhule trict during 1980–81. The study th up 42 paybills inflated by over 42,000 through manipulated mu rolls, false thumb-prints and signat Estimating that the fraud district-w would amount to over Rs 86 lakh of the annual budget of Rs 5 cr Bhatia informed the Government of findings in a list, citing actual cases.

Charges Compounded: The then A Antulay government sat on the co plaint until late December 1981 w Gavai's committee was appointed to vestigate Bhatia's charges. But the co mittee came to life only when Bhos administration appointed a mem secretary; in September 1982, Ga aided by Bhatia and his team, reched 18 of the 42 cases and discovered ther misappropriations. Said Ga "Where no job had been done, would show work, or the same mus roll would be shown for more than job. In some cases the presence of bourers was completely rigged. W have a Marathi saying '*pretacha ta varche loni khane*', which means ea the ritual ghee from a dead man's b and this is precisely what these offi and politicians are doing—eating money earmarked for the poorest the destitute."

Meanwhile, Bhatia had che out a further 300 paybills, 36 of w were partly or completely fraudu Unfortunately he had made en and early in June 1981 he was abru transferred to Alibag district. The math was that a day after Bh

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man of the committee, resigned in ...ter and tried all kinds of pressures to ...e us reinstate those 100 pensions. But ...e stuck to our guns, and now three ...ths later he has withdrawn his resig-...on."

The first indictment of the corruption ...e as far back as December 31, 1981 in-...ter to the Department of Housing and ...al Assistance—No. SGY/DO ...1981—written by Arun Bhatia, dis-...collector of Dhule who was transfer-...presumably for his crusade against ...ption (*see box*). The letter pointed ...at large-scale irregularities were in ...ss, and said: "It is a fact that ...n and small loans are sanctioned by ...committees without assessing the eligibility of each and every case and that there is every possibility that genuine cases under Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Anudan and Swavalamban Yojana are left out. The cases have also not been considered chronologically." Over a year later, however, little had been done to correct the many irregularities.

Strong Attack: But two years after the schemes were first launched, they have at last begun to attract flak. Although still hushed up by the Government, the extent of misappropriation in Pune and Purandhar came up in the monsoon session in Bombay last year when Purandhar Congress(I) leader Madhukar Raut was lambasted by Bharatiya Janata Party activists Anna Joshi and Dr Arvind Lele for allegedly making money from the schemes. Soon afterwards, Pune newspapers reported that a confidential report by District Collector Nand Lal squarely indicts the Congress(I) leader for large-scale corruption.

Accountant General Das's report unambiguously indicted the working of the Swavalamban scheme. A state-level committee headed by Maharashtra Congress(I) President Gulabrao Patil, appointed in June 1981, objected strenuously to the irregularities and misappropriations. District collectors and divisional commissioners have argued in the collectors' conference that the committees' unbridled power leads to corruption and misuse. Maharashtra's finance secretary, during a

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transfer orders arrived, Dhule Superintendent of Police (SP) Charanjit Singh Azad issued a wireless order to all district police stations restraining them from registering any complaints of irregularity in the EGS without his permission. Existing prosecutions, too, were slowed down and the police allowed only a handful of cases—those hinging solely on the testimony of witnesses—to enter the courts.

Explains Dharam Chand Chordia, Dhule-based BJP anti-corruption activist: "Of the 78 corruption cases unearthed by Bhatia only 27 have reached the courts, all cases of underpayment which hinge entirely on labourers' evidence. The obvious aim is to turn the witnesses hostile and discredit Bhatia's investigation as not a single case based on fraudulent work records and other cast-iron evidence has been admitted."

But after Bhatia's transfer the EGS Malpractices Citizens' Vigilance Committee of Dhule, an independent group of Dhule professionals led by Dr Bhaidas Patil and Nirmal Kumar D. Suryavanshi started probing major irrigation works near Dhule township, measuring actual works against measurements on official records. By August 1982, the vigilance team had completed its first investigation of Tarade Percolation Tanks' critical "gorge" work, made to grid specifications to avoid a dam burst. The results were shocking.

Inaccuracies: The zilla parishad deputy engineer, in charge of the job, was found to have noted measurement far in excess of the actual in order to conform to the specifications. Against a specified top width of 3 m for the gorge, the percolation tank had a median top width of 2 m and the bottom width was roughly 21 m instead of 26. The height of the gorge, at 4.5 m, was lower by a metre than the specifications, the length 70 m instead of the 120 m specified. As a result, estimated the committee, the exchequer and workmen were robbed of over Rs 62,000 on a Rs 1.07 lakh job, a fraud of over 57 per cent.

Emboldened by this success, Patil and his team began measurements on seven more percolation tank works. Preliminary results show that in the Soundane gorge, the defalcation is almost Rs 1 lakh for a Rs 1.68 lakh job.

Patil at the Soundane percolation tank: colossal fraud

Said Patil: "But the collector says there is a Rs 78,000 defalcation, so we will accept that figure to expedite the case." In Mehergaon-Kaothi there is a Rs 1.4 lakh defalcation and in Raver a Rs 1.2 lakh fiddle. Said Suryavanshi: "The Bhatia findings are nothing compared to the actual case. We have picked eight works at random and found that there is corruption of over 50 to 60 per cent, which means that if the Government examines the entire district they'll find that Rs 3 crore out of the budgeted Rs 5 crore has been eaten away by corruption."

Even though that figure is arbitrary, the Government has shown little inclination to probe further. Bhatia and his investigators have been moved out of Dhule, the accused engineers function unhindered. On occasion, politicians have interfered and stalled investigations. Two letters dated September 11, 1981 and March 31, 1982, from the subdivisional official at Nandurbar to Bhatia document the meddling of Swaroopsingh Naik, state minister for public works, tribal welfare and social welfare, in an EGS complaint filed by workmen of Nawapur tehsil. The first recommended prosecution "for the misappropriation of government money by preparing bogus/false musters and preparing bogus thumb impression on the muster-roll"; the second said that following Naik's intervention the workmen would not press charges, so prosecution was not advisable. In the high-stakes business of EGS manipulations, the vested interests had clearly won the day.

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hearing of the Gulabrao Patil committee on October 25, 1982, said that disbursement of funds by non-official committees "violated the canons of financial propriety". Arguing that the Government is responsible to the legislature for the money disbursed from the consolidated fund, he insisted that it was improper for the Government to abdicate its responsibility in favour of non-official committees which were not answerable to the legislature or the Government.

Procrastination: Despite the loud criticism, the Bhosale Government has done little. Although a retrospective check by tehsildars has been authorised, suggestions by the accountant general about restructuring the programme to allow executive powers to tehsildars and collectors in allotment have been ignored. Token efforts at closer supervision have been made—a notification to collectors dated November 25, 1981, ordered vigorous verifications and surveys. But these were virtually negated since administrators were given no powers to control allotment or even recall loans once they were found to be bogus. The Patil committee, moreover, has suggested revamping the allotment procedures in order to save the otherwise laudable schemes from misuse, but again no action has been taken.

Despite the loud criticism, the Bhosale Government has done little. Although a retrospective check by tehsildars has been authorised, suggestions by the accountant general about restructuring the programme to allow executive powers to tehsildars and collectors in allotment have been ignored.

Even more suspicious is the Maharashtra Government's response to a strongly worded letter—No. 1-12011/56/82 O and P dated August 8, 1982—from Union Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Rao Birendra Singh ordering the state to terminate the Swavalamban Yojana on the grounds that it was redundant and likely to cause more harm than good. Explaining that under the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) the Central Government offered similar loans and advances, the letter stated that a duplicate loan scheme was likely to upset the implementation of the IRDP.

Once again, the Maharashtra Government responded by ignoring the letter. Only a short while after the communication was received, Bhosale assured legislators that the district-wise MLA meetings that the schemes would be done away with.

An important source of political patronage for the Government, it seemed last fortnight that the Sanjay Gandhi Yojanas would continue to dole out funds to Congress(I) legislators, corporators and party workers in the state. And for the deprived weaker sections, on hope and assurances, they are are only another Antulay promise to nought.

—CHANDER UDAY

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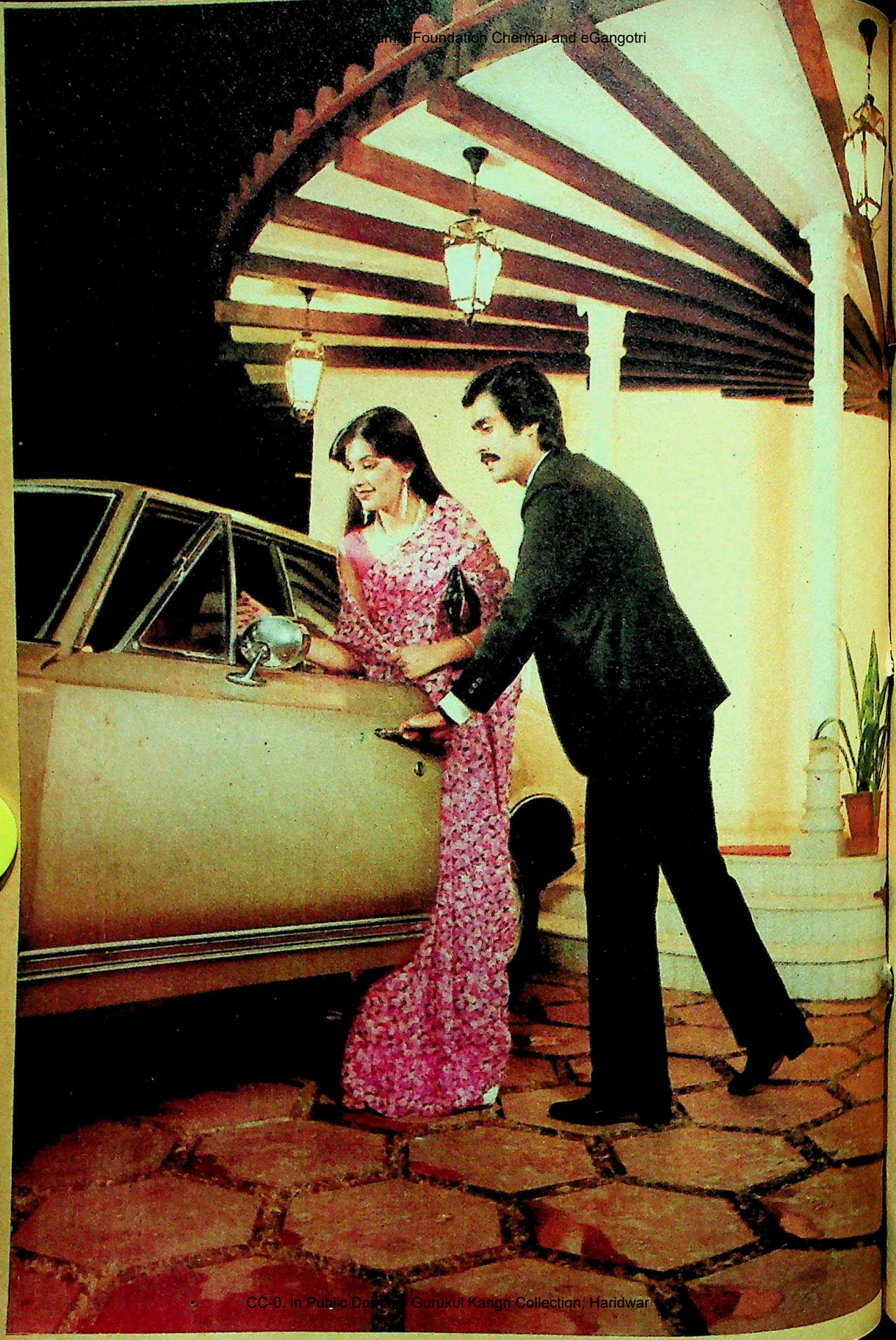

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TIGHTENING THE SCREWS

THE GOVERNMENT is almost certain to introduce fresh legislation in the next Central budget to plug some of the major excise loopholes now being exploited by industry. It is estimated that more than Rs 2,000 crore of tax money is locked up because of legal battles over the definition of manufacturing costs, with large numbers of companies claiming that post-manufacturing expenses such as packaging, advertising and marketing cannot be subjected to excise levies. At a recent meeting, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee had chided industry for dragging issues to the courts, and Finance Ministry officials feel that the current problem of below-par tax collections can be tackled effectively if the definition of what constitutes manufacturing cost can be stated more clearly. At the moment, some companies claim that up to 10 per cent of their total costs constitute non-excisable post-manufacturing expenses.

ATING NEW LINES

GOLDEN Tobacco plans to diversify in a big way in the near future, adding new lines of activity to its existing cigarette business. Its proposal to enter the shipping arena expected to be cleared shortly, with a sanction to acquire 00 GRT at a cost of between Rs 20 crore and 25 crore. The pany had initially sought permission to invest Rs 100 crore. er projects planned by Sanjay Dalmia, who now controls den Tobacco, include a viscose fibre project and a joint sector ash plant in Gujarat. Dalmia, who recently acquired akshi Mills and Premier Paper, also plans to set up a ity paper plant in Thailand—an import substitution project. The shipping proposal, made some months ago, is awaiting clearance, with the Government having decided to increase rivate sector's quota for additional tonnage during the Sixth from 1.53 to 2.03 million GRT. This decision will benefit private sector applicants as well, including Raunaq ing. Both Golden Tobacco and Raunaq Shipping are ed to raise funds from the Euro-dollar market for their ship ation.

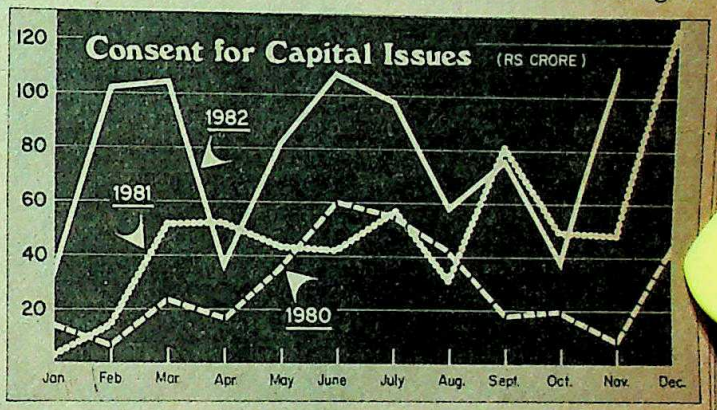
ORM IN A TEACUP

INDIAN industry seems to have been caught crying wolf once gain. For all the noise that was made through most of 1982 bout the credit squeeze, liberal imports and a demand re- on hitting production in a series of areas, most of the big panies in the concerned fields do not seem to have done too y. Whether it is in trucks, tractors, soda ash, paper, or a host ther areas, the annual reports and company forecasts by and show that production levels have been maintained if not ed up, while profits have not been affected. The problem the industrial production index confirms that there was one) to have been of a minor nature, quite out of proportion to llyhoo that was raised a few months ago. And the index shows that production has picked up once again—from in August to 168 in September. The Government's econ- s as well as many industrialists now agree that the "worst" er.

In a graphic illustration of this trend, despite talk of ssion, a record number of 1,017 letters of intent were issued 982 as compared to 916 in 1981. Maharashtra leads the tally 135 letters of intent, followed by Gujarat, 103, and Uttar desh, 92. West Bengal has apparently failed to catch the repreneurial eye and has only 24 letters to its credit. arashtra and Gujarat between them account for nearly 40 cent of all industrial licences issued up to November 1982, the former state topping the list with 90 out of 407 licences. owed by Gujarat, 65 and Tamil Nadu, 39.

BOOMING BUSINESS

FOR ALL the talk of the debenture boom going bust, new issues on the capital market continued to do well during 1982. Capital raised during the year totalled Rs 600 crore, up from Rs 522 crore in 1981, when there was a trebling of



capital raised in the market. Debentures accounted for over 60 per cent of the total in 1982, at Rs 374 crore. Official consents for capital issues also witnessed a handsome increase, from Rs 608 crore in 1981 to Rs 849 crore in the first 11 months of 1982, till the end of November. The full year may have seen consents cross Rs 900 crore, indicating a 50 per cent increase over the previous year. Clearly, the boom in the capital market is here to stay, and officials expect new issues to hit the Rs 1,000 crore mark in 1984.

HOT PURSUIT

IN A FRESH indication of the continuing trend towards corporate take-overs, a proxy war appears to be building up for acquiring control of Jaipur Udyog. The Sahu Jain group, which used to control the unit, appears to be making a comeback bid, while a Calcutta-based outfit is reported to be eyeing the company as well. ITC, meanwhile, after having failed to gain control of India Cements, is looking around for other prey.

The Char family, meanwhile, has decisively lost in its bid to regain control of Standard Batteries. But the Khaitans, who control 14 per cent of the company's equity, may still have to slug it out with the Bajorias, who are already in the battery business (Willard India), and are looking for ways to strengthen their over-all position in the battery market, now dominated by Chloride India. The issue here, as elsewhere, will be settled by the behaviour of the financial institutions, who control 36 per cent of the shares in Standard Batteries.

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NORTH-SOUTH

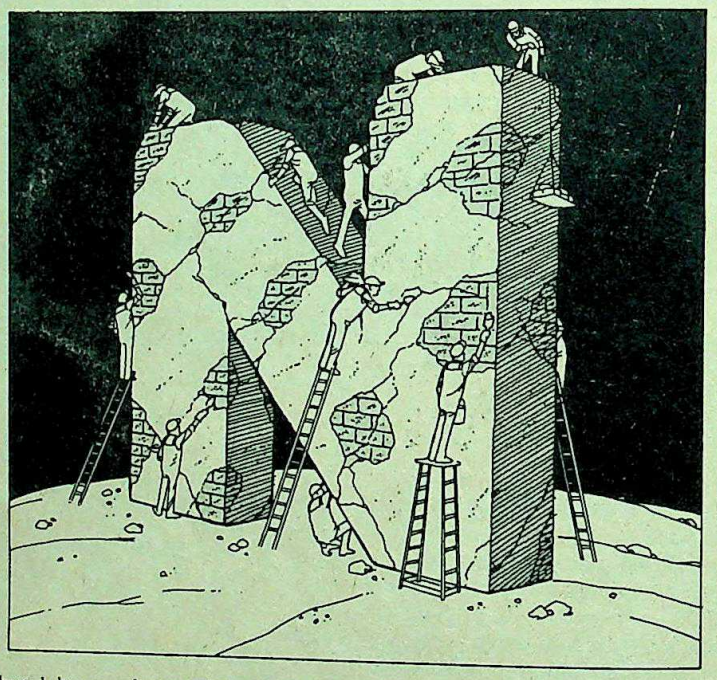
Grass Roots Solutions

"WORK is our birthright and we shall achieve it." Outside the main gate of Crown Mills in Bombay's seedy mill area of Parel sits a man who has sat there for the last six months gazing vacantly at a cloth banner that has been strung by some of his friends high above the gate. The banner carries the slogan in Marathi, paraphrased more or less from Tilak's famous message, "Swaraj is my birthright . . ." The man, Pandu More, has a vague idea that Tilak said something about birthright but cannot recall whether it was about freedom or about work. Pandu is vague about many things: his family, which is now more or less broken up, his job—he started as a *hamal* in the mill and ended up as a dishwasher in the works canteen—or his next meal. "What's the difference, anyway?" he asks, shrugging his lean shoulders, "work or freedom, what's one without the other?"

One doesn't expect the Pandus of Parel to come up with throw-away lines that might have come out straight from a Vijay Tendulkar play but poverty and philosophy are close chums. Pandu knows his Tilak and his Gandhi, he knows all their slogans but he does not know his employer. "I have worked in this mill for more than 10 years," he says, "but I have never met the proprietor. I saw him once getting down from the car but I have never talked to him. I wish I had."

The scene shifts to New Delhi, a far cry from Parel. Fifty distinguished-looking men and women crowd around tables discussing the new economic order, whatever that means. They have apparently come from all over the world and know their figures—and arguments—backwards. There are economists, social scientists and bureaucrats among them, the kind of people who sit on committees, advise governments and international institutions and have the ear of the world's most powerful leaders. They say that the world is shrinking rapidly, that the North and the South cannot live apart too long and must come closer and this can be done only through some kind of a global order which, of course, means more international committees, more seminars and more advisers. They have not heard of Pandu More but they believe, and quite sincerely, that the new global order which they are aiming at will ultimately make it easier for the Pandus to survive and possibly thrive.

Economic Choices: I have my doubts. There are only two ways in which an economy can be developed: (1) from the top downwards; and (2) from the bottom upwards. The so-called planned economies have tried the first method; the free economies have followed the second. Both have been successful up to a point, but only up to a point. However, those following the second method have been more successful although they too have now come up against difficulties.



In India, we have so far had a mixed system but the top-to-bottom order has dominated. Ours is still a heavily directed economy with most decisions coming from the top, either from the ministries or the Planning Commission, with very little scope for those at the bottom. The new global system that is envisaged by, say, the Willy Brandt Commission will reinforce the top-to-bottom state of affairs. In fact, it may be worse. Major decisions will now be taken not in New Delhi but in the World Bank headquarters in Washington and the OPEC head office in Vienna. We seem to be moving from nationalisation to internationalisation, a trend that may be looked upon favourably by the global setting crowd but is unlikely to be of much help otherwise.

The composition of the Brandt Commission itself raises doubts about the usefulness of its report. Its members are drawn almost entirely from the ranks of politicians and bureaucrats, with not a single industrialist among them (the only Katherine Graham, owner of *Washington Post*, can be called one). We have nothing against politicians or bureaucrats but they do have a tendency to suggest solutions or measures which normally require the services of more politicians and bureaucrats, just as all military solutions end up with a call for more military personnel and armaments. Since the politicians and the bureaucrats are themselves responsible for the present mess—as they have been running all international organisations so far—it would be wise to think twice before endorsing their new solutions to old problems.

Disowning Responsibility: The Brandt report encourages the belief that the poor countries are poor because the rich ones have exploited them and snatched away their wealth that government policy can always be able to improve on market, that international institutions rather than enterprise—free or private—are the key to development. This line of argument pleases politicians and bureaucrats very well. They can always say, as indeed they have been saying, that India or Bangladesh or Ethiopia are poor because the British or Americans have exploited them; and that they themselves, that is, the politicians and bureaucrats of India, Bangladesh and Ethiopia are not responsible for their poverty. They also argue that the Government must get them out of the mess, since this gives them more power and authority. They favour international institutions rather than free enterprise, as the former are ultimately controlled by national governments, that is, politicians and bureaucrats.

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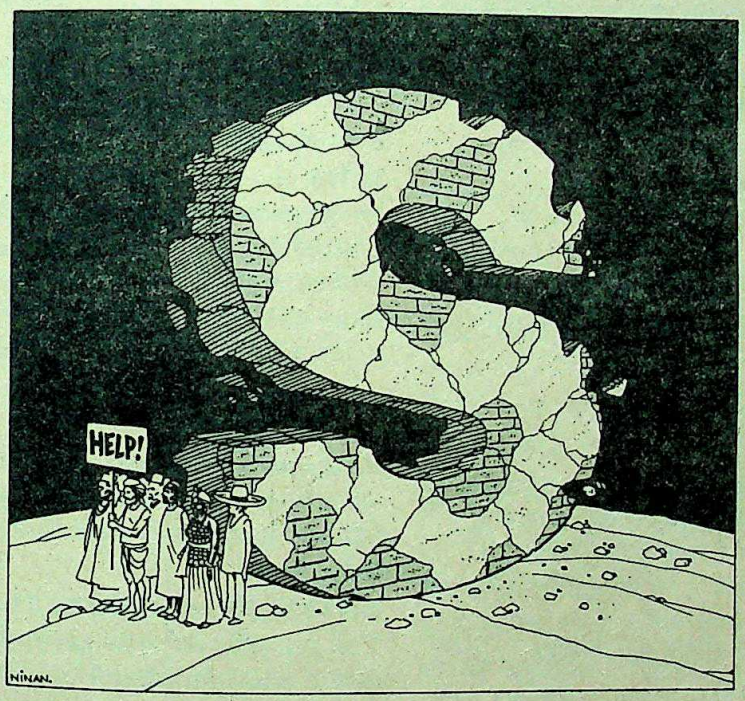
What, in fact, the Brandt report is ...g is: "Leave everything to us, that is, ... Government; we shall work out a new ...al strategy and do away with inflation, ...tion and unemployment at one swi... Twenty years ago when the poor ...ries were just beginning to put on ...economic armour, this line of argu... would have gone down pretty well, ...se the Governments were not as dis... as they are now. Only the most ...or the most ignorant will be prepa... to put their fate totally in the hands of government, or international organi... which means the same thing.

TAKE India and assume, for the sake of the argument, that the states are independent countries. Communist Party of India-Marxist ...al) Government in West ...gal has been saying for ...s that West Bengal is poor ...se it has exploited by ...alists and, of course, by Government in New ... Is this really true, ...h? West Bengal has ... lagging in industrial ...h ever since Indepen... though it abounds in ...kind of resources—coal, jute—that should have ...t in the front line for ... There are a large ...er of public sector in...s in West Bengal but ...e of them is doing well. ...re are also a large number ...rivate sector enterprises ...they too are not doing ...or as well as they are ...g in other states.

In fact, most of the ...ational companies ...h were established in the ...-Guest Keen Williams, Indian Alu... ...m, Philips, Union Carbide—are ...ning only a token presence there. ...st Birla group, which was at one ...Almost synonymous with Calcutta ...which still nominally maintains its ...quarters there, is increasingly busy el... ...where. Who has exploited whom? West ...gal is now probably the No. 5 or No. ...e in the country and at the rate at ...it is going down it may soon be No. ...In fact, Uttar Pradesh received more ...twice the letters of intent last year ...) than were issued to West Bengal, ...gh, for its size, Uttar Pradesh is ...st certainly the most backward state ...e country.

The second basic Brandt report pre... is that international institutions rather than private enterprise are the key to development. Translated in Indian terms, this means that Central government institutions and policy can make or mar development at the state level.

Take Gujarat, perhaps the most dynamic state in the country. There is not a single Central financial or other institution located there. As far as I know, no Gujarat finance minister has ever complained of stepmotherly treatment on the part of Delhi. Yet, like Topsy, it keeps on growing and is close to Maharashtra in the number of licences and letters of intent it received last year. The key to development in Gujarat is enterprise—call it free, call it private—and both the private and the public sector there are enterprising. Government servants in Gujarat talk the language of businessmen while in Calcutta, businessmen are forced to talk the lingo of bureaucrats.



Real Reasons: Come back to Bombay and the textile strike and talk to Pandu More outside Crown Mills. The strike may have political overtones—all strikes do—but the fact that the strike has dragged on for months means that the textile mills, or some of them, are so sick that they do not really mind going under. And who made them sick? Industries that are not responsive to the changing market, that do not chop and change their products in line with the market demand ultimately go under. There is very little that politicians or bureaucrats can do about it. The illusion that the Government can do anything has been carefully fostered by people who control the Government.

There is always a price to be paid when you flout the rules of the market or of good housekeeping. The textile mills of Bombay flouted both rules and are now paying for it. So are the steel mills of Britain and the motor car plants in the United States. If the Japanese have been able to drive the British and the American car industry to the wall, it is not because they have a bigger pull with the International Monetary Fund or with the World Bank. Global systems are all right if you do your homework right. But to suggest that there is some kind of a magic wand that would put the world back on its feet, if only a few wise men were permitted to design or use such a wand is to suggest the impossible. There are no magic wands in this world and even Keynes did not find one. "Wealth is not so much gold or even strategic raw materials," he pointed out, "but hard work, brains, imagination and initiative." And there is nothing global about these things, he might have added.

Rightly or wrongly, Indians have begun to think that New Delhi has failed them and their salvation is now their own affair. Top-to-bottom solutions would be unwise in a political climate which doesn't seem to be conducive to global solutions imposed from above. In any case, it would be wrong to think that the Government can play any role irrespective of market forces. The solution to Pandu More's problem in Bombay is no different from the solution to N.T. Rama Rao's problems in Andhra Pradesh. Rama Rao thinks that decision-making should be centred in Hyderabad rather than New Delhi and the entire top-to-bottom process should be reversed. He has a point. The Indian polity is so complex and multi-polar that it is both impossible and unwise to run it as a one-man or one-woman show from New Delhi.

The New Delhi-Hyderabad or New Delhi-Bangalore syndrome is also a variation on the North-South dialogue. It is impossible to solve India's problems in Washington or London or Tokyo or wherever it is that Willy Brandt and his colleagues operate from. They have to be solved here, in and around Crown Mills and the hovels of Parel in Bombay and the dusty by-lanes of Howrah and Chawri Bazar. Unless, of course, you want Pandu More to go on strike until kingdom come.

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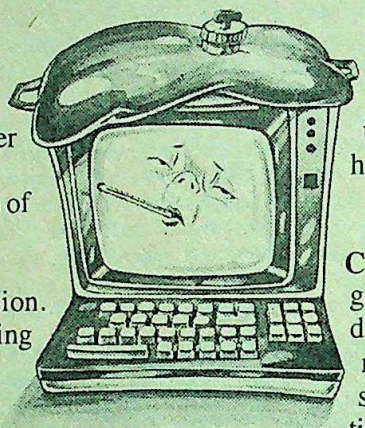
A MINICOMPUTER BUYER WHO DOESN'T ASK THESE VITAL QUESTIONS MIGHT NEVER GET THE RIGHT ANSWERS.



The decision to invest in a minicomputer is not taken overnight, but after a great deal of thought. Likewise, the selection of the right computer requires the same mature thought, and the same detailed searching to arrive at the correct decision. There's no dearth of companies offering minicomputers that claim to have all the answers, to provide all the solutions. Not all of them can live up to their claims. The buyer's greatest safety lies in addressing this list of questions to every prospective supplier — vital questions which, if answered satisfactorily, will establish the quality of the product, the credentials of the company that sells it, and the sincerity of the service that backs it.

Q1

Manufacturing facilities: Do you have adequate manufacturing facilities to deliver reliable products on time? Or are you merely importing computers c.k.d., and assembling them? More important, will you be producing the necessary spares on a regular basis for the next five years, and beyond that? Or are you selling computers that are already obsolete abroad?

ICIM 101 is a part of ICIM's manufacturing programme. ICIM's Pune factory is one of India's largest, most comprehensive and most modern. You are assured of continuity of the product line and spares.

Q2

Documentation: Are you organised to provide suitable documentation to support your product? Is it comprehensible to the user, is it exhaustive, and up-to-date?

ICIM 101 like all ICIM products, is supported by thorough documentation that is clearly comprehensible, exhaustive and regularly updated to reflect every improvement in hardware and software.

Q3

Customer Engineering Services: Are you geared for CES support? Promises aside, do you have engineers resident within a radius that makes possible the necessary support within a reasonable response time? Do you have spares stocked within a reasonable distance from the installation?

ICIM gives you the security of 87 resident service locations with a ratio better than 1 engineer per 2 installations. Requisite spares are maintained at each service point. It is, in no uncertain terms, one of India's largest computer service organisations and ICIM 101 is backed by this network.

Q4

Promises and practice: Everyone makes promises. What's your record on delivery: how often, how soon? Do you have ready software, or is it forever 'being developed'?

ICIM 101 is supported by a range of ready software. You get it the day you get your ICIM 101. It's up and ready, and immediately productive. Should you require a special non-standard package, we'll give you a definite delivery date — and keep it.

Q5

Development and Quality Assurance: Is your hardware and software thoroughly tried and tested — first internally, and then at customer sites, — before it is released for general use? Have you safeguarded against recurrent trouble, down time and lost productivity through an established test programme? Or is your software merely bought out?

ICIM 101 gives you this assurance. The hardware has been tried and proven internally, through rigorous tes

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programmes, and confirmed in-use, with more than 600 successful installations over the past one year. Software is developed and tried internally, either at ICIM, or the Company's U.K. associate, ICL. You can be sure you're not part of anyone's test programme.

Q6

Education and training: Do you really know your own product and software? Will you take the responsibility for training my people to get the most out of it?

ICIM gives you a range of tried, tested and proven machines and software, developed by ICIM or its U.K. associate, ICL. Part of our total computer service is training your people to exploit the full potential of the machine or the software.

Q7

Understanding my business: Are the packages you sell me supported by people who are knowledgeable in the application, to give me the skilled support I need to use it?

ICIM software comes to you from the people who know what it's all about. It is developed by professionals with a thorough insight into the actual working of every aspect of business and industry. ICIM personnel are supporting applications in production planning, econometric modelling, manpower skills, education, engineering design, operations research and financial planning, to name just a few.

Q8

Long-term strategy: I want to buy from a supplier I'll be happy to stay with in the foreseeable future. Is your system enhanceable, or will I have to add another? Can you offer me future compatible growth in terms of hardware/software and systems? When I need to move up, can you supply the required system? Will it be compatible with the software I've been using? Or will I need another set of software?

ICIM 101 comes from a company with an established record, and a planned future. The ICIM 101 you buy today can continue to grow with your business. If you ever need to move up, rest assured that compatibility — of hardware, software and systems — is built in. And all ICIM systems speak a common language.

Eight vital questions. ICIM 101 has answered, with honesty and quiet pride. Address these questions to prospective suppliers. The answers will help you choose between a wise investment and a white elephant.

ICIM International Computers Indian Manufacture Limited

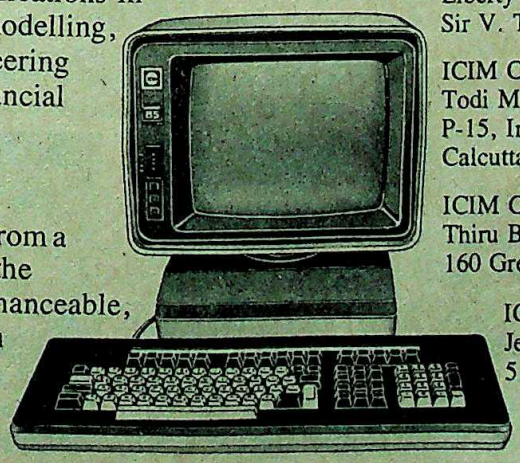
For details please address enquiries, on your official letterhead, to:

ICIM Computer Point
Liberty Building, 1st Floor,
Sir V. Thackersey Marg, Bombay 400 020.

ICIM Computer Point
Todi Mansion, 7th Floor,
P-15, India Exchange Place Extension,
Calcutta 700 073.

ICIM Computer Point
Thiru Building, Ground Floor,
160 Greams Road, Madras 600 006.

ICIM Computer Point
Jeevan Tara Building, 1st Floor,
5 Sansad Marg, New Delhi 110 001.



ICIM 101. THE MINI FROM INDIA'S MOST RELIABLE COMPUTER COMPANY.

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TWO-WHEELERS

The Two Stroke Revolution

THE AUTOMOBILE revolution has finally reached India—not on four wheels, but on two. Motor cycle, scooter and moped production has doubled in the last three years, from 3 to 6 lakh, and is expected to double again in the next three, to 1.2 million. Demand is racing ahead still faster. Already, the country is producing as many powered two-wheelers as it was bicycles 25 years ago. And by the end of the '80s annual production is expected to be 2 million: a 600 per cent increase over the decade. And what is now a Rs 500 crore industry could by 1990 be a Rs 2,000 crore sector.

Customers are queueing up for the machines—and not just for those produced by Bajaj Auto, which has a waiting list of 1.4 million. Cento, the new 100 cc scooter introduced last year by the Lucknow-based Scooters India, has a waiting list of 1 lakh. Lohia Machines, which is yet to turn out a single scooter, already has 1.4 lakh people waiting to pay up, while Girnar Scooters of Gujarat made 40,000 bookings in just five days. Down south in Bangalore, Karnataka Scooters has a customer queue of 40,000 for its new BSA GT50—and that's considered modest by the industry. Altogether, an estimated Rs 200 crore has been coughed up by people as advance deposits for two-wheelers.

Sea Change: Sensing a goldmine, producers are falling over one another to set up new plants or expand capacities: Bajaj Auto is trebling capacity, from 1.6 to 4.6 lakh. Hero Majestic, the Ludhiana-based company that entered the field just four years ago, is already selling close to 1 lakh mopeds annually and plans to treble that to 3 lakh. Escorts hopes to move from 60,000 to over 2 lakh. A series of other companies are gearing up to cross the 1 lakh capacity hump: Kinetic Engineering of Pune (makers of Luna mopeds), the TVS group, Enfield India and Lohia Machines.

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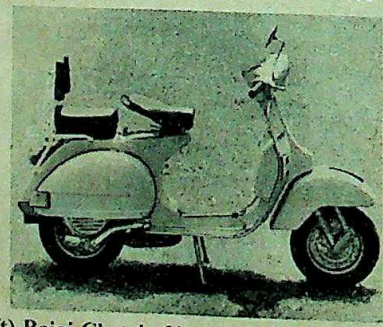
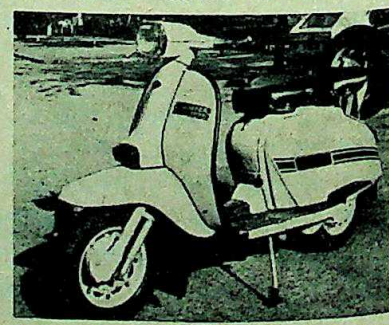
The market has changed beyond recognition in other ways. Two years ago, there was hardly a two-wheeler in the country which offered much more than 40 km on a litre of petrol. Today, most new vehicles offer at least 25 per cent greater fuel efficiency, and some claim much more. Vastly superior technologies are being introduced in collaboration with the biggest names in the world's two-wheeler industry. And the most important deve- ment here is the Japanese onslaught o Indian market. Honda is tying up w both Hero and Kinetic, the former f mini-motor cycle and the latter for h da's new scooter model. Yamaha h collaboration agreement with Escorts f new 100 cc motor cycle, while Suzuk tied up with TVS. Baj now negotiating with Ka saki for an 84 cc step-th motor cycle.

Piaggio, the world's gest scooter manufacturer helped Bajaj set up his plant in 1960, is staging meback in India throug laboration agreements Lohia Machines of Ka and Andhra Pradesh Sco BSA has a tie-up with Ka taka Scooters, and Zun of West Germany with field.

The boom has caused by a combinatio factors. Petrol prices first through the roof, low middle class aspirations cars to two-wheelers. down the income ladder continued failure of transport systems in the and towns has forced sands to think in ter inexpensive personal transport ve And, outside the major cities, better and a wider road network created a new area of demand. The burge demand as a result of all this has n matched by production capabilities.

Two years ago, the Government up to the new trend and facilitate boom with a major policy change. In uary 1981, it allowed new foreign coll rations for vehicles up to 100 cc e





(From left) Bajaj Chetak, Vespa XE, Vijay Super, Girnar Scooter, BSA GT50: matching demand with

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At the same time, a more liberal licensing policy enabled many new companies to enter a booming industrial field.

Intense Competition: It is indicative of instant successes now possible in the field that Hero Majestic, barely four years in the business is already producing close to a lakh mopeds annually. TVS, a later entrant, has been as much as an instant success in the south, where it has concentrated its marketing effort.

As new projects get sanctioned, investors respond with enthusiasm to the prospect of putting money in a booming industry. Lohia Machines, which seems to be setting the pace in many ways for the rest of the industry, floated debentures on the capital market a couple of months ago, and got an overwhelming response from nearly 2 lakh people. The company's share price doubled overnight to over Rs 40. Kinetic Engineering's Rs 10 shares are at their peak of Rs 160. A debenture issue by Kelvinator, the refrigerator company which has set up over a scooter plant in Rajasthan and signed a collaboration agreement with an Italian company, also got an excellent response. Bajaj Auto, whose Rs 100 shares had dropped on the market to Rs 900, are back to around Rs 500.

The entry of new companies, the prize foreign collaborations, and the prospect of vastly stepped up production capacities, means a change in the two-wheeler market. Says Rakesh Jayal of Lohia Machines: "From now on, supply will match demand." The intense competition that is shaping up will even shake the one man who has held over a decade has straddled the two-wheeler industry like a colossus: Rahul Bajaj.

Number One: Two years ago, on the crest of a wave, Bajaj was talking of becoming the world's No. 1 in scooter manufacture, overtaking the international leaders, Piaggio of Italy. His position in the domestic market was unassailable: waiting periods of over 13 years, and a quality vehicle that no one could match, selling at the lowest scooter price in the country, and, indeed, the world. A 30 per cent price advantage over Piaggio helped Bajaj storm foreign markets, and exports quickly zoomed to Rs 13 crore. Bajaj's licensee units in Taiwan and Indonesia were doing well, new licensee units were being planned in Bangladesh and elsewhere, and he had made his first foray into markets like the United States and Europe, including Piaggio's home market in Italy.

Today, the situation is vastly different. His Taiwan licensee has walked out on him, and the Indonesian market has collapsed because of more up-to-date machines available from rival manufacturers in other countries. Exports as a whole plunged from Rs 13 crore to Rs 5 crore. On top of everything, Piaggio slapped on law suits in the US and Germany, charging Bajaj with copying its product and violating old agreements. In October, Bajaj finally met Piaggio representatives in London to offer an out-of-court settlement, but Piaggio refused.

If his global ambitions have been nipped in the bud, labour trouble at home has forced a curtailment of production, which fell from 1.5 to 1.36 lakh in 1981–82. And the domestic market is now under threat of more intense competition. In a neat turning of the tables, Piaggio is now taking Bajaj on in *his* home market. The Japanese, who used to manufacture only motor cycles and not scooters, have overnight entered the scooter field with production programmes that rival Bajaj's own. And domestic companies have got licences and letters of intent to set up new factories that will turn out quality machines.

These developments have suddenly changed the situation. At current production levels, Bajaj's waiting list is down from 13 to eight years. And as his own production increases and rival Vespa and other vehicles enter the market, Bajaj expects his waiting list to disappear altogether in three years. This will be the first time in about 15 years that Bajaj will be in the position of having to sell scooters that do not command a resale premium on the market. Will that eat drastically into the demand for his products?

Policy Shift: Bajaj claims he is not concerned whether there is a waiting list or not, and argues that "a long delivery period does not help the manufacturer". But conscious of the rapidly changing market situation he has already swung into high gear. He has introduced a second vehicle, the M50, which will keep pace with the shift in demand to lower-powered vehicles, and which already has the longest waiting list in the industry. Next year, he plans to introduce a 100 cc scooter (most of his present models have a 150 cc engine) that is obviously intended to take on Lohia's 100 cc Vespa XE. And he is negotiating with Kawasaki for an 84 cc step-through motor cycle. His existing scooters will also be given a new look,

We do not find the new vehicles' technology to be more advanced than what is available with us.

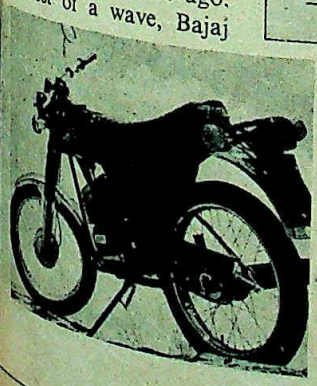
—RAHUL BAJAJ, Bajaj Auto

Last time, the boom depended on government action. This time, it is in the hands of private enterprise. I think that makes a big difference.

—S.D.S. MONGIA, senior vice-president, Escorts

Everyone thinks two-wheelers are a goldmine, but they may easily turn out to be base metal.

—H.D. SHETTY, vice-chairman, Karnataka Scooters



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after a new body style is developed by an Italian company, Industrial Prototipt and Serie.

He has also got from the Government a fantastic expansion licence that will enable him to keep a quarter of the total two-wheeler market till the end of the decade. This will help him command economies of scale available to no other manufacturer in the country, and therefore be able to dictate a price that will help him command the market. As S.D.S. Mongia, senior vice-president of Escorts, points out: "Bajaj can reduce his price by up to Rs 1,000 per scooter and still survive. With this price advantage, he can easily lay the rest of the competition low." Others in the industry also expect a price war in the years ahead as competition becomes more severe. But Bajaj denies any intention of "launching a price war".

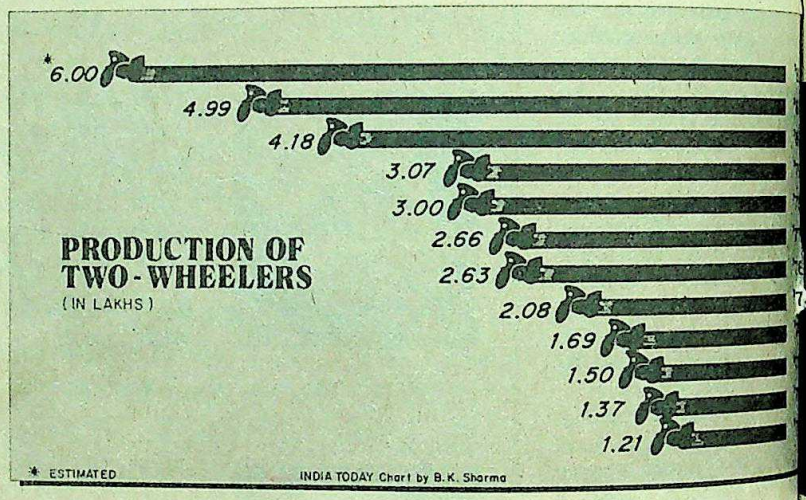
HE HAS decided on a major change in corporate policy. For two decades, he has not had to advertise domestically because of his long waiting list. He does not even have a company sales force. But forced now to change, he has launched an unprecedented "corporate image" advertising campaign through five carefully selected magazines. His R&D outfit, the biggest in the industry, has been working at double-quick time, updating the existing products, and Bajaj says, "We do not find (the new vehicles') technology to be more advanced than what is available with us."

Bajaj admits to the changed situation, but has three crucial advantages: "a lower price, established quality and an accepted brand image". These factors explain why no one in the industry is willing to lay any bets on him getting into serious trouble in the market.

Hurdles: If Bajaj remains king of the industry, several question marks hang over the projects of rival producers. Most of them plan to start their production runs with a substantial percentage of imported parts, going up to 40 per cent. But the customs duty is prohibitive: as high as 160 per cent. And hopes that this will be brought down to around 50 per cent or less have not so far materialised. The industry is still banking on a concession coming in the next budget at the end of February when the Government may oblige in order to help its own car project, Maruti Udyog.

Living on that hope, Escorts has already delayed its 350 cc motor cycle project by a full year. If the duty is not reduced, most of the new manufacturers could find themselves priced out of the market: the Escorts 350 cc, equipped with a high-performance Yamaha engine, will then sell for over Rs 20,000. Smaller machines will probably be unable to sell for less than Rs 9,000. Karnataka Scooters, which is first out in the race with its GT50, is already finding the going slightly tough because its 50 cc bike sells for over Rs 9,000, only a few hundred rupees cheaper, for instance, than Escorts' 175 cc Rajdoot. And Lohia Machines plans to sell at a price of between Rs 9,000 and Rs 10,000 whereas Bajaj Scooters are available for Rs 8,400.

In contrast, the big success of recent years has been Hero Majestic, which offered its mopeds at the lowest price in the market and was an instant success. Price, obviously, is a key selling point, and one which acts in favour of the existing producers who set up their factories when costs were much lower.



New Technology: Against this, the new producers are offering up-to-date technology. Lohia Machines, for instance, says that its Vespa XE is absolutely the latest scooter available anywhere in the world, incorporating several technological changes in the engine design, ignition system, suspension and so on. More generally, the new machines usually offer higher engine speeds and better compression ratios that enable smaller engines to deliver as much power as some older, larger engines do. This means, in effect, that the consumer gets roughly comparable performance for a lower fuel cost.

But the new technologies also throw up other questions: Japanese vehicles have complicated designs, with very fine tolerances that may not stand up to the normal tinkering of roadside mechanics. After-sales service could therefore cause problems. This seem to be the reason why Enfield India's managing director, S. Vishwanathan, stresses, not high performance, but other qualities in the new cles he will turn out in collaboration Zündapp Werke of Germany: stu reliability and durability. These, he "are of the greatest importance fo Indian public because of the poor conditions".

Product quality will, quite obvi be a key determinant of success. Th time a scooter boom seemed round corner was in the mid-'70s, when Sc India Limited (SIL) was set up in now as a public sector unit. Arou downstream units were then set up ferent states, which SIL would feed the basic power-packs. But SIL fail erably with quality and most of the stream units had to pack up, one o turning to the manufacture of kitch ensils! Even today, SIL is strugglin the market resistance and what ma director L.K. Joshi calls a "cre gap" among consumers. But Mo Escorts sees a basic difference from uation then and now. "Last time, om depended on government actio time, it is in the hands of priva prise. I think that makes a big diffe

Other Problems: Nevertheless two-wheeler manufacturers depend cillary suppliers for a good portion machines. And their quality is diffi monitor. Warns H.D. Shetty, vi man of Karnataka Scooters: "If th lary sector does not grow it could everybody out of gear." Personnel be another problem in an quadrupling in size in just six years simply aren't enough skilled work technically qualified executives w boast of proper experience in the

For these and other reasons, the industry are keeping their fing sed about the fate of some of the jects. "This bunching together o

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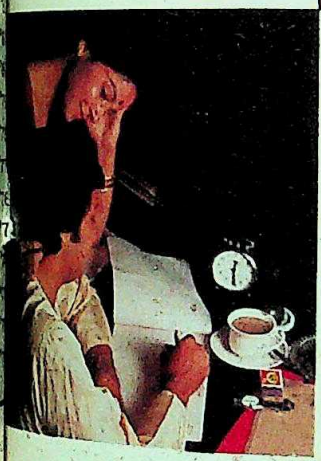
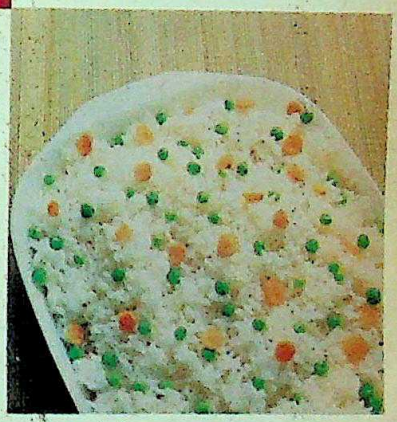
"The shopkeeper calls inflation. All I know is, getting increasingly difficult to run a home. We were all so happy when my husband got an unexpected promotion."



some to set aside as a monthly saving.

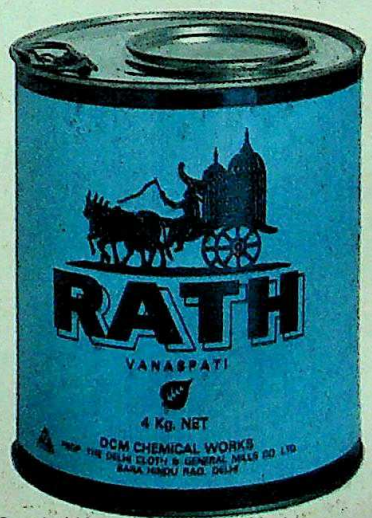
I realise how fortunate I am to be married to a husband who really cares... It makes all I do so worthwhile. And he teaches the children to appreciate me, too,... occasional presents, or compliments for my cooking. It makes me look for ways in which to express my love—every meal I cook, every new recipe I try out, even dressing the dishes to make the food more interesting.....



ere's nothing new about rising ces... my grandmother always ks about the good old days. But , you feel the pinch when es eat into your household get. I try to manage as well as I , without my husband noticing differences.

e knows... he never shows t he knows everything. And works so hard, even brings e work home. So many nights e worried about his health, ause he's stayed up to work. I ow he does it because he loves he wants us to have the best of ything. It's so lovely that a er can love and sacrifice as ch as a mother can. Last month, got an unexpected promotion. celebrated it by bringing home w tea-set—we badly needed . Now, there's money to spend the little extras. And there's

Rath Vanaspati.
Because the language of a woman is love.



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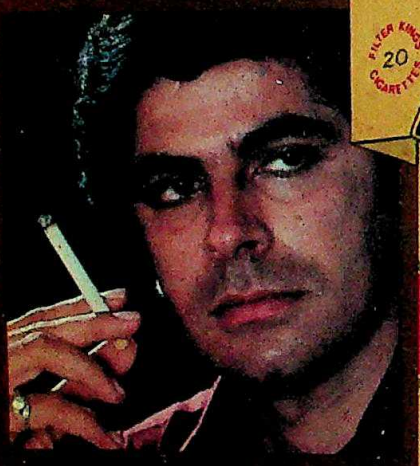
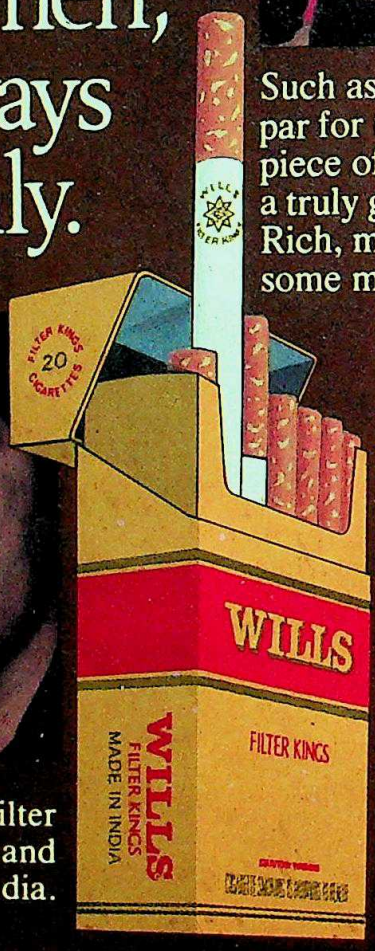
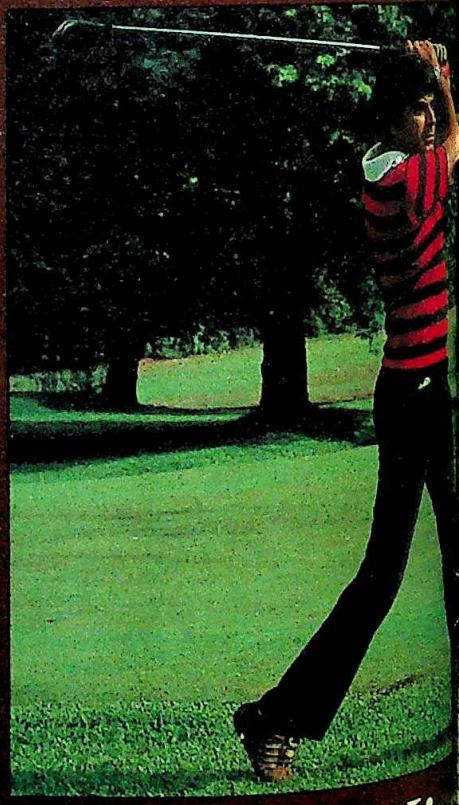
For some men, things always go smoothly.

Such as getting first night tickets. Getting par for the course in golf. Getting a rare piece of art. And getting the experience of a truly great smoke. Wills Filter Kings. Rich, mellow—and very, very smooth. For some men, it's most satisfying.





The largest exported filter kings made and sold in India.



Wills Filter Kings
Wills excellence.
In kingsize.

STATUTORY WARNING CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

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...ey," says Shetty. "Everyone thi-
...-wheelers are a goldmine, but they
...ly turn out to be base metal."

...is already accepted in the industry
...good many of the three dozen diffe-
...promoters of two-wheeler projects
...ever get their projects off the
... Of those who do, as past expe-
...shows, a good number will prove
...essful in the marketplace. Bajaj,
...the shrewdest judge of the business,
...es that by the end of the decade
... will be at the most eight units pro-
... more than 1 lakh vehicles each per
... Even eight units, to my mind, are
...y. The others would either fall by
...side or barely manage to survive."

...timism: Nevertheless, for all the
... and uncertainties ahead, Bajaj is as
... as anyone else that the industry is
... a "significant change". And Mongia
...orts is confident that a production
...million in 1990 is more than likely,
...most big manufacturers offering a
...ge of vehicles instead of being sing-
...duct companies.

...e changes therefore are many and
... Production will increase manifold;
...es will disappear as supply matches
...d; fresh technology will herald a
...eneration of low-powered, fuel-effi-
...achines; many producers will ope-
... a scale now reserved for Bajaj;
... customer will have a bewildering
... of vehicles to choose from. India's
...eeler industry is finally kicking
... life.

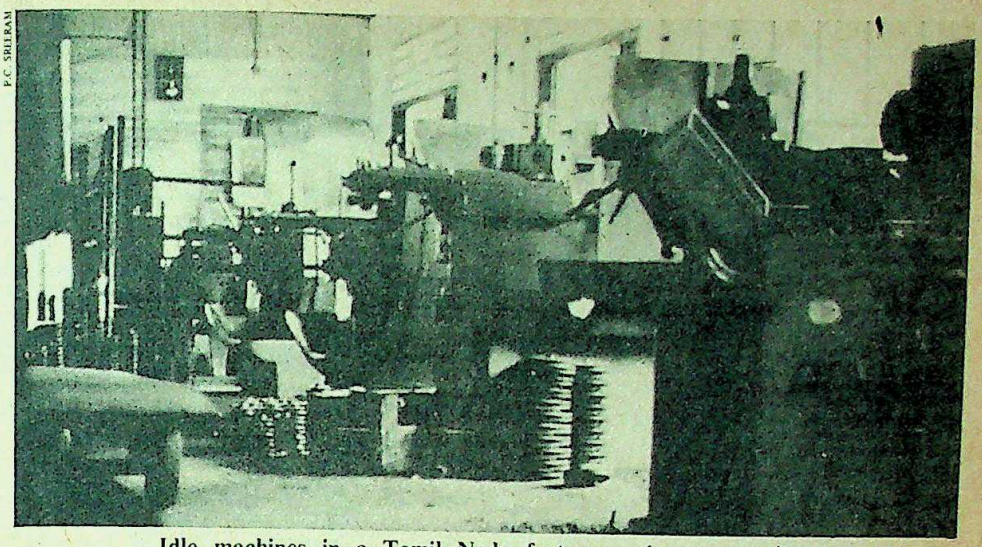
—T.N. NINAN

...NADU

...tate Of ...leness

...HE WHEELS of industry are
...rinding to a halt in Tamil Nadu.
...or the last two weeks ever since
...te Government switched off
... to its high tension consumers,
... factories have simply stopped
... Some have tried to limp along using
...e diesel-powered generators but it is
...e battle. Says one hard hit indus-
...: "We have practically returned to the
...ustrial era."

...e element of exaggeration in his
...ent is perhaps forgivable. Industries
...mil Nadu have been struggling in the
... of massive power cuts ever since the
...east monsoon failed in November,
... reservoirs nearly empty. In the
... that have followed the Govern-
...ts had no alternative but to



P.C. SRIRAM

Idle machines in a Tamil Nadu factory: major repercussions

keep slashing its power supply to industry. It started by imposing a 45 per cent power cut, and later increased this to 60 per cent. On December 29, as the water levels in the reservoirs hit "rock-bottom", the Government took the drastic step of cutting off high tension power completely for two weeks. And it warned that even after the two-week power holiday industries would be subject to a further 50 per cent cut in electricity at the source, or what is technically known as a 'demand cut'. The 50 per cent of normal demand that will be catered to, will be subject to a further 60 per cent cut. It gave every indication that the cuts would be more stringent.

Staggering Losses: The effects of such drastic steps are not difficult to imagine. Already industrialists reckon that the two-week stoppage will cause production losses of up to Rs 100 crore. In the vital cement industry, losses are expected to touch Rs 4 crore. Says K. Ramamurthy, executive director of India Cements: "The situation is unprecedented. Since December 27, neither our 2,600 tonne-a-day factory at Talayathu in Tirunelveli, nor our 1,900-tonne unit at Sankari in Salem district has received a single unit of power."

The story is the same in other industries. Worst hit of all is the textile industry. The industry as a whole, including both the handloom and the powerloom sectors, expects production losses to be in the vicinity of a staggering Rs 45 crore. The Southern India Mills Association says that daily losses are in the region of Rs 2.8 crore. Small-scale industries which do not have the capacity to withstand such prolonged shut-downs have also been badly hurt. V.S. Narasimhan, the president of the Tamil Nadu Small Scale Industries Association (TNSSIA) puts forward the view that small-scale industrialists should be subjected to smaller cuts than the big users.

Ramamurthy (left) and Narayanaswami: facing an unprecedented crisis

Some industries have been hobbling along using their own generators. But most industrialists fight shy of resorting to this alternative, as it costs nearly three times as much as power supplied by the Government. Many industrialists are also reluctant to spend money on expensive generators that big factories need. And anyway generators cannot be used in all units. Says M.K. Kumar, the president of the Madras Chamber of Commerce: "Industries are bound to close down. Any number of captive generators will not be able to salvage the situation. Different industrial processes imply varying power load and nothing can be done only with generating sets."

On top of production losses industrialists point out that they will have to bear the burden of repairing equipment damaged because they are out of operation. For example, Leslie Prabhu, the Madras manager of Dalmia Cements says that erratic power supply damages the refractory lining of the kilns in cement factories. Ramamurthy of India Cements says that it costs nearly Rs 5 lakh to have a kiln lined again. Chitra S. Narayanaswami, the articulate chairman

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For decades, doctors have insisted that it is healthier to grow upwards than spread sideway Shouldn't our cities heed this advice?

Cities are much like people. The moment they run to fat and begin to spread, they suffer. From overly-stretched services. Or overly-stretched resources to lay out new service networks.

It stands to reason. The farther people live away from the city, the greater the effort and cost to serve them.

Just consider this: There are, say, a hundred families living in independent houses in some distant suburb. They need water, sewage, electricity, transport, roads, the works. Such complete service networks are needed every time a new suburb comes up.

Now take these hundred families and locate them inside the city. Maybe with fifty families in each of two high-rise buildings. Then the Corporation's efforts are limited to supplying just these two buildings close at hand, instead of a whole neighbourhood far away. Such highdensity zones can keep our cities compact, while reducing the cost of civic services.

The fact is, any new development puts a strain on services. But because high-density zones can be contained in a smaller area, they can make do with the existing infra-structure, which can be more easily strengthened. For instance, a large capacity service line over a short distance is cheaper than many low capacity lines over long distances. And it is more expensive to distribute any commodity piecemeal than in bulk.

But sadly, current anti-building legislation thinks otherwise.

While you cannot have buildings of more than two floors in 90% of Madras today, no new building in Bombay is allowed even a quarter of the space held by the one it replaces.

Such policies naturally encourage a sideways spread.

Now what about the aesthetics of the suburban sprawl? Like an insidious growth, acres upon acres of concrete are ravaging our precious agricultural lands. All in the name of keeping the skyline low!

What we've overlooked is this: Every flat that goes up leaves as much open space on the ground for lawns, beds of flowers or trees. Such spaces are increased several-fold by building vertically. So living space is increased and, horizontally speaking, our cities don't get pushed unduly outward. While the countryside, instead of being a distant memory, becomes accessible to all.

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Mettur Chemicals emphasises that all energy-intensive process industries like aluminium will be affected in similar ways.

Labour Affected: Inevitably the power crisis has had other major repercussions. Coupled with such losses and with little hydel to offer, most factories have had to resort to large-scale lay-offs. Since the power crisis started, more than 1.5 lakh workers have been laid off. The textile mills alone have laid off 83,000 workers. And India Cements and Mettur Chemicals have laid off more than 2,000 of their workers. In other small and medium industries more than half the labour force stands to have been laid off.

The lay-offs threaten to become an even more ominous problem than production loss. Already protest demonstrations and strikes have become part and parcel of the daily industrial scene. Questions are cropping up about wage payments for the two-week period. A debate has also begun on the extent of lay-offs and whether they should be treated as leave. The General Secretary of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, A. A. Subramaniam, has begun to talk of the subject of a separate fund for the benefit of workers during lay-off periods. Ramanujam, the general secretary of the Indian National Trade Union Congress has urged the Government to begin tripartite talks to determine the course of "crisis management".

Labour leaders have turned their ire against the Government. S. Viswami, the state general secretary of the Progressive Labour Federation has demanded the "resignation of the Government for having brought such misery to the people of Tamil Nadu". The president for Indian Trade Unions leader P. Ramamurthy and All India Trade Union Congress leader, A.N. Gopu have also put the blame squarely at the door of the Government for the "sudden, unprecedented, massive power cut".

OPINIONS vary on who is to blame for the crisis. There is no doubt that nature played cruel tricks on Tamil Nadu in 1982. The north-east monsoon failed in November 1982 and the levels in the hydel storage reservoirs have been dropping ever since. Between the Mettur Dam in Salem district and the Kundah Dam in the Nilgiris, the installed capacity is 1,370 mw. Normally, at this time of the year generation is at half the installed capacity but at the end of 1983 only a measly 120 mw was being generated.

As if this was not enough the Tuticorin thermal power station, which is the mainstay of power supply in the state,

Ramachandran: shifting the blame

also chose this moment to develop serious faults. Two of the three 210 mw units broke down developing what the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board (TNEB) chose to describe as "quite mechanical trouble". Even the third 210 mw unit is only generating half its installed capacity. At the 450 mw Ennore thermal power station in Madras the story was much the same. Of the three 110 mw units and the two 60 mw units, a total of three units were out of order for one reason or the other.

All the three thermal power stations are also facing coal shortages. Tuticorin which needs 1.7 lakh tonnes of coal every month was left with only 33,000 tonnes. Tamil Nadu Electricity Minister S. Ramachandran says that the quality of the coal supplied by Coal India to the Tuticorin plant leaves a lot to be desired.

Even as the TNEB and the Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) worked frantically to set right the Tuticorin plant, both organisations were trying to lay the blame on each other for the breakdowns. Ramachandran asserts that the equipment supplied by BHEL for the Tuticorin plant is not up to the mark. He adds: "Neyveli thermal power station, provided with imported equipment, is functioning relatively better." To drive his point home, he draws a similar comparison with West Bengal where the Bandel power station built with imported equipment is faring better than the Santaldih thermal station.

Poor Maintenance: BHEL officials are quick to refute such allegations. They defend their position saying that TNEB maintenance leaves a lot to be desired. Says one senior company official: "Boilers in thermal stations need to be maintained and it is here that Indian electricity companies fail. Thermal stations require a high degree of precision engineering."

Whatever the truth of the allegations and counter-allegations there is no doubt that the equipment in the Tuticorin station is in a parlous state. One unit, which was recently repaired began functioning erratically almost immediately. Ramachandran also blamed the Centre for tarrying over suggestions put up by the state Government which he says would have alleviated the crisis in the state.

There are no indications that the crisis is likely to ease in any way in the near future. The rains are many months away and till then there is little chance of more hydel power being generated. Whatever little water there is has to be conserved as even drinking water is in short supply in Madras. Says Ramamurthy of India Cements: "There is not even a glimmer of hope at the end of the tunnel." Narayanaswami of Mettur Chemicals puts it differently. He says with resigned sarcasm: "Factories in Tamil Nadu are doing wonderfully. There are no trippings in power, there are no unscheduled power cuts. The atmosphere is peaceful and totally devoid of tension." In fact, the peace of the graveyard.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

THE MARKETS

Uncertain Note

THE YEAR came in like a lamb and went out like a lamb, which is a good way to go, but there were indeed a few leonine roars in between. In fact, at one time, lions seemed to be on the rampage—in the guise of bulls, of course—but things didn't work out the way everybody thought they would, though no one was hurt and some scrips really went to town.

Apart from cement shares which really did very well—they were marked up by as much as 80 per cent over the year—most other scrips either marked time or went under. Shipping did very badly, followed by jute and cotton textiles, and to a certain extent, aluminium. By the end of the year, however, most scrips were recovering from recession and even engineering shares showed some life. It could be that the worst is over but no one really knows.

The new year has, however, begun on an uncertain note and the day the Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka governments fell the air was so thick with rumours you could cut it with a knife. Share markets are notoriously accident-prone, particularly political accidents, which seem to upset most calculations. If the ruling party can be ousted from the two southern states, would it also lose Maharashtra and Gujarat, the two industrial states that set the pace for business activity throughout the country? It is not the kind of question that can be answered off the bat, but then it is precisely the kind of question market-

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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1982	Low 1982	Close 5.1.83	Change on Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	59.00	32.00	36.50	2.00
Asian Paints	34.75	29.00	34.75	3.00
Associated Cement	421.00	212.50	402.00	(9.50)
Bata	1,650.00	960.00	1,115.00	(160.00)
Bajaj Auto	49.60	36.00	42.30	(0.90)
Berger	42.00	26.50	30.50	(0.50)
Bharat Gears	57.50	26.80	54.50	(1.30)
Birla Jute	74.00	53.00	74.00	5.00
Bombay Plast	44.00	30.00	41.50	1.00
Bombay Stor	80.50	62.00	73.00	(1.00)
Bombay Dyeing	28.50	20.20	27.30	(0.70)
Brooke Bond	346.00	201.00	242.50	13.50
Bull Mills	220.00	177.50	202.00	(5.00)
Cadbury	1,020.00	675.00	755.00	(25.00)
Century Spinning	25.00	15.00	17.50	1.30
Chemicals & Fibres	58.00	41.50	57.00	0.30
Colgate India	168.00	78.00	85.00	1.50
Colgate	242.50	171.25	195.00	5.00
Colour Chem	16.20	11.65	13.75	0.95
Colourant Dyes	44.50	31.31	34.00	1.06
Cotton Cloth Mills	24.30	18.30	21.20	0.40
Dalmia Inf	21.50	16.50	21.37	(2.37)
Delhi India Hotels	41.00	26.00	34.00	2.50)
Dhan	49.87	34.25	44.62	5.43
Dhampur	61.25	35.75	64.50	7.00
Dhunseri Sperialities	48.75	25.00	24.25	(1.25)
Dunlop Nylon	32.60	25.00	33.50	1.00
Electric	37.20	21.50	21.70	(7.10)
Elgi Rem Williams	506.00	368.00	474.00	(7.00)
Eicher Fertilisers	56.00	47.25	54.75	0.50
Escorts Lever	34.40	21.82	34.86	0.86
Eskayef Motors	30.00	23.00	34.50	5.50
Ester Dyes	23.60	17.00	19.80	1.60
Eveready Aluminium	25.00	18.00	22.75	0.25
Finolex Cable	247.50	172.50	230.00	12.00
Gujarat Dyestuff	26.00	18.50	23.90	0.60
Gujarat Explosives	107.00	50.00	56.00	1.00
Gujarat Cloth	35.00	26.00	28.50	(0.25)
Gujarat Organic	36.10	26.20	33.60	0.50
Gujarat Oxygen	165.00	82.00	86.00	2.00
Gujarat Reed	45.00	29.00	42.50	5.50
Gujarat Exchange	43.00	21.00	44.30	4.20
Gujarat Tea	36.00	22.00	21.50	(1.20)
Gujarat Synthetics	73.20	55.00	57.40	(1.10)
Gujarat Ures	70.20	45.10	65.40	(0.50)
Gujarat Engineering	160.00	94.00	162.00	2.00
Gujarat (Madras)	35.75	20.00	23.50	0.50
Gujarat & Toubro	86.00	45.50	55.75	(0.75)
Gujarat Cotts	21.65	14.50	20.50	1.76
Godfrey & Mahindra	61.00	38.00	53.50	2.50
Gujarat Industries	272.50	220.00	257.50	18.75
Gujarat Iron	36.50	22.50	24.00	(1.50)
Gujarat Organic	29.00	16.50	24.25	1.95
Gujarat	213.75	168.00	195.00	25.00
Gujarat Paper	63.00	36.00	38.50	0.50
Gujarat Electronics	48.50	34.50	46.70	(0.60)
Gujarat Ala	30.30	26.00	29.20	(0.60)
Gujarat Auto	97.00	58.75	82.00	11.00
Gujarat	424.00	303.00	374.00	(50.00)
Gujarat	38.00	21.00	37.50	5.75
Gujarat	58.25	32.50	41.00	(1.50)
Gujarat Wallace	182.50	118.00	181.00	14.00
Gujarat Fibres	35.65	27.30	39.00	4.90
Gujarat	52.12	30.00	30.50	(16.81)
Gujarat	66.00	34.00	43.00	nil
Gujarat & Laxman	16.80	12.60	16.25	(0.25)
Gujarat Manufactur	31.50	19.00	23.75	0.25
Gujarat Steel	67.50	45.50	66.00	3.50
Gujarat	429.00	272.50	296.00	6.00
Gujarat	737.00	367.00	452.50	9.50
Gujarat Carbide	70.75	35.75	42.60	5.10
Gujarat Martin Black	28.10	23.90	25.00	0.10
Gujarat Agro	33.50	23.50	24.80	0.40
Gujarat	291.00	228.00	282.00	(6.00)
Gujarat	26.50	18.35	24.60	(0.80)

their tend to ask when things begin to get a bit out of hand.

Little Affect: One should not, however, overdo the political bit. Take Maharashtra, for instance. The state has been without a functioning government for nearly a year but that doesn't seem to have affected the stock market. If the scrips have not done as well as they should have, the reasons are more economic than political. The recession has played its part and so has Datta Samant, up to a point. Without the credit squeeze and without Datta Samant, some scrips could have done pretty well, Mahindra & Mahindra, for instance. But then Mahindra & Mahindra has not done too badly either. After a one-for-one bonus issue it is very near its pre-bonus price, which is not bad.

Will 1983 be as good as last year? With all its ups and downs, 1982 was one of the busiest years on record, with a great spread of investment activity, both in equity as well as debenture issues, with some companies going in for second and third waves of debenture issues and flooding the market with bond paper. For some reason, it seems unlikely that the pace of activity will hold at that level in the new year. Firstly, there will not be that much money about, as imports will almost certainly be curtailed and industrial growth is petering out. Secondly, the investors will be more cautious in view of the looming political uncertainties, and will prefer keeping their money in the bank rather than with companies.

On the other hand, there are signs that the world recession is on the mend and it is a matter of time before things start looking up. In such a situation, companies with a link to the export market are likely to do better, as, for instance, shipping. Nearly all shipping shares are in the dumps and should be a good buy. So should the shares of engineering companies—Telco and Ashok Leyland come to mind—which were under pressure throughout the past year. Cement shares, on the other hand, are past their peak. It is unlikely there is much money in them.

In any case, it is too early to speculate, as the Central budget is due in less than six weeks and a great deal depends on how the finance minister does his sums. He is still talking about prices and inflation, which may be just a ploy, but if he really thinks that time has not come to take a calculated risk with reflating the economy, money may be tighter than you think and that could be the end of the market as it has been shaping up for the last few weeks. But it is possible that the finance minister has a few cards up his sleeve.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit	Currency	TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1	As $	9.6560	9.5500
Austria	100	As Sch	59.4300	58.7000
Bahrain	1	Dinar	26.0200	25.7900
Bangladesh	100	Taka x	42.6723	41.7024
Canada	1	Can $	7.9612	7.8750
Egypt	1	Egp £	11.8303	11.7034
France	1	Fr Frc	1.4770	1.4200
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.5025	1.4870
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.4402	1.4297
Iran	100	Rial	11.6400	11.5500
Italy	100	Lt Lira	0.7200	0.7100
Japan	100	Jap Yen	4.2680	4.1600
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.8879	0.8813
Kuwait	1	Dinar	34.0300	33.7500
Malaysia	1	ML $	4.2654	4.2145
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.8659	0.8595
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7444	0.7390
Netherlands	1	D Glds	3.7750	3.7310
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.7933	0.7491
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.6840	4.6310
Spain	100	Sp Pt	7.8100	7.7400
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4700	0.4500
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.3530	1.3380
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	4.9920	4.9400
Tanzania	1	T Sh	1.0262	1.0187
Thailand	100	Baht	43.0500	42.7300
UK	1	Pound	15.7394	15.5982
USA	1	US $	9.8225	9.6875
UAE	1	Dihram	2.6769	2.6573
USSR	1	Rouble	12.9759	12.8806
W. Germany	1	DM	4.1840	4.0810

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Ltd New Delhi and quoted between the banks on January 8, 1983.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index		
January 5, 1983*	249.9	(0.1)
Cereals	255.1	2.7
Chemicals	324.2	0.7
Industrial Fibres	168.9	(4.8)
Metals	346.2	(4.2)
Sugar	178.7	(2.6)
Textile Yarn	221.9	nil
Vegetable Oils	304.6	7.9
Gold, standard,		
January 5, 1983 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,750.00	20.00)
Silver, .999, January 5, 1983 (Rs per kg)	2,940.00	110.00
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index		
January 5, 1983*	247.1	3.2
Cement	241.7	(16.2)
Chemicals	220.9	12.4
Engineering	309.0	11.8
Fertilisers	211.8	2.3
Man-made fibres	406.5	(4.1)
Paper	488.5	7.5
Rubber Goods	167.7	9.0
MONEY		per cent
Money Supply, November 19, 1982		2.1
Bank Deposits		1.1
Foreign Exchange Assets		(4.8)

* 1969–70 = 100

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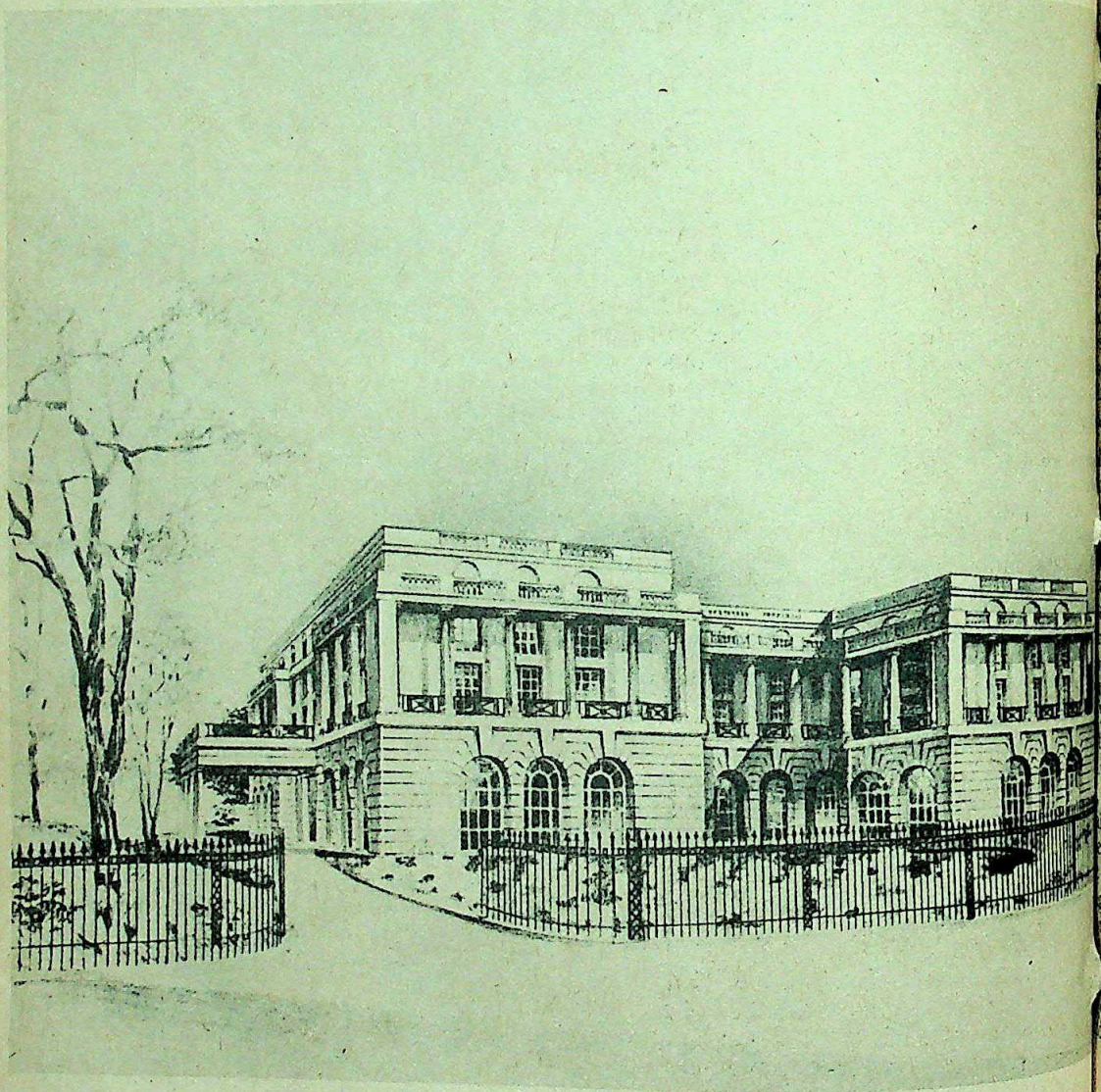
A magnificent re-creation of imperial grace and elegance.



25 Sankey Road, Bangalore-560 052. Phone: 71018, 71813. Telex: 0845-8209 WIND IN

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Welcomgroup presents

Windsor Manor

The imperial residence in Bangalore

...come to ...sor Manor, ...urious ...ence, ...brick ...ck to ...

...s ...The ...f leisurely ...n parties and ...nces, 'burra ...s'.. lavish dinners ...sitely served, a lifestyle ...as marked by elegance and ...cable taste.

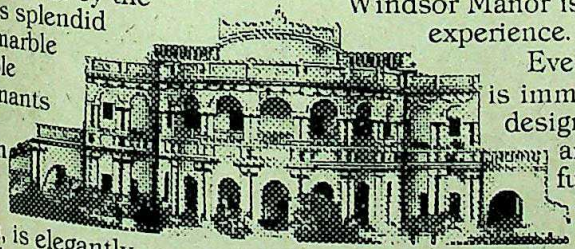
...day, the Windsor Manor ...s inspiration from that ...ld era and recreates that ...l ambience of graciousness, ...sy and comfort.

...umns, arches and bay ...ws

...Manor stands white and ...ished, with Tuscan ...s, wide verandahs and ...s, recreating the ...ctural marvels of Regency ...d. And its interiors are ...kka indeed.

...ou enter, there's **Arcot** ...you are struck by the ...y of this splendid ...white marble ...a marble ...n, pennants ...eraldry.

...Deccan ...e, the ...s ...room, is elegantly ...d with sofas and Queen ...Chairs. Just the place for ...l muffins.



The **Regency,** the great banqueting hall, flanked by terraces, lit by chandeliers...the very place for receptions, conventions.

The **Westminster Room,** hushed and discreet for distinguished committee meetings. Its wood-panelled walls and handsome mahogany conference table create the aura of a Cabinet Room. And, of course, the **Grosvenor Club,** a special retreat for the chosen few.

Majestic rooms and suites

Living in residence at the Windsor Manor is a rare experience.

Every room is immaculately designed and furnished... elegant window sashes, luxurious drapes, subtle touches of gilt, the soft glow of bracket lamps.

There are 12 special suites... each one woven around the name it carries... Auckland, Hastings, Trafalgar.

When it's time for great dining...

The Manor serves the finest cuisines in Bangalore.

The **Wellington Room,** the formal dining room, offers cuisines from England and the Continent, South India and special Mughlai delicacies.

The **Nelson Room** serves a superb breakfast menu, grand lunch buffet, Indian and Chinese cuisines for dinner, and snacks between meals.

The **Royal Afghan,** the pavilion in the lawn, for unsurpassed North-West Frontier fare. And the **Royal Derby,** the exclusive English pub, serves draught beer dispensed from specially imported kegs.

A world of ease and leisure

In the grand manner of an imperial residence, the Manor offers you every facility.

Windsor Spa, the pool in the lawn. **East India Company,** for exclusive shopping. Fashionable **Diana's,** the ladies' beauty parlour. **Beau Brummel,** the gentlemen's hair-dressing salon.

Indeed, the Windsor Manor is the grandest place to stay in Bangalore. You will be delighted that there's a place like it today.

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We enjoy people

Windsor Manor

The imperial residence

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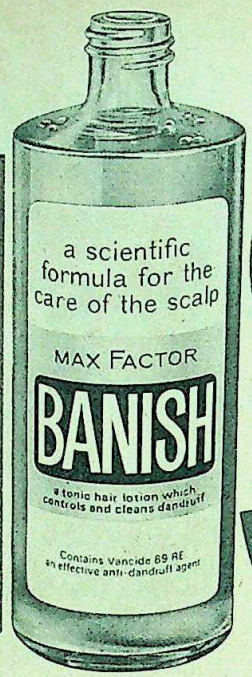
Embarrassment comes in white dandruff flakes

BANISH gets to the root o

BANISH



BANISH, the hair lotion that controls and cleans dandr relieves itchiness and discomfort. BANISH contains **Vancide 89 RE**, a special anti-dandruff agent that's sa and effective.

Just clean your scalp and rub BANISH in. No special rin ing or massage necessary. No need to shampoo your hair each time you use BANISH. You can use shampo just as often as you normally do! And BANISH won't even interfere with your regular grooming or beauty aids! With BANISH in your hair, watch your dandruff problem vanish!

Only from the beautiful world of Max Factor . . . naturally!

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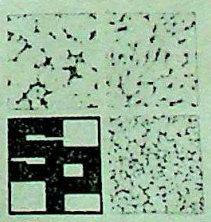
Somany Pilkington's, the name that stands for the best in wall tiles, now brings you Rectangular Wall Tiles — an exciting new concept in tiles for creating novel types of patterns on your walls.

Mix colours, match designs, place them in different formations — a little imagination and SPL Rectangular Wall Tiles can make your walls come alive with a beautiful difference.

- **Perfect dimensional accuracy ...**
  SPL tiles are engineered for total accuracy — clean joints; a smoother finish.
- **So easy to install ...**
  A special pattern behind each tile ensures better adhesion to your wall.
- **Matchless quality ...**
  SPL tiles are the largest-exported tiles from India and compare with the best in the world. No wonder, even years later they'll still look brand new.



SOMANY-PILKINGTON'S

Tiles with style

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DELHI UNIVERSITY

Campus Crunch

WITH groups of slogan shouting teachers and karamcharis demonstrating against the vice-chancellor, and agitating students demanding resumption of classes, Delhi University is in the throes of the worst crisis in its 60-year-old history. Since July 15 last year, when the university reopened after the summer vacations, its 1.2 lakh students have seen the inside of their classrooms for less than 20 days as one strike after another has disrupted its working. And there are no signs that the end is anywhere in sight yet.

Last month, the general body meeting of the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA), attended by 1,200 of the 5,600 college teachers, resolved to continue their two-month-old strike. Says DUTA Secretary Murali Manohar Prasad Singh: "The whole academic year has been practically wasted due to the indifferent attitude of the authorities."

Trouble broke out on campus barely two weeks after the university reopened on July 16, when the 6,000-strong Delhi University and College Karamchari Union (DUCKU) started a go-slow agitation which led to the disruption of classes. On September 25, they followed this up by going on an indefinite strike. Since both DUCKU and DUTA are controlled by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), DUTA organised dharnas, demonstrations and a one-day strike in sympathy.

Simultaneous Action: Even as the karamcharis continued their protest, DUTA also decided to strike from October 12 in support of their own charter of demands. Both strikes continued side by side until November 20, when DUCKU was persuaded to return to work on the assurance that their demands would be met soon. Says DUCKU President Nilamber Pandey: "We withdrew our strike because of the Asiad, because some events were being staged in Delhi University. Moreover, we were not aware that we would be cheated and betrayed."

While DUCKU gave in, the teachers have stuck to their demands despite opposition from a small minority of their fraternity. Their biggest grouse is the lack of promotional opportunities. DUTA leaders point out that unlike university-level employment where there are promotional avenues as readers and professors, a college lecturer is consigned to his position throughout his career because of the absence of a higher grade. Says a former secretary of DUTA Inder Kapahy: "It is our unique fate to be recruited, live and die in the same grade. It doesn't happen in any other profession."

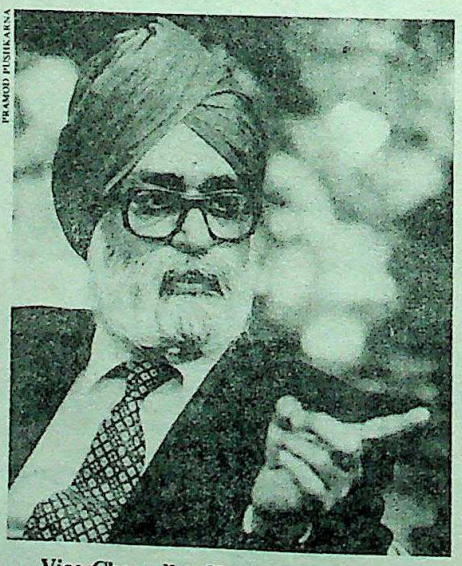
The problem arises because teachers in Delhi University are governed by different sets of rules. The 1,200-odd university-appointed teachers have better promotional avenues; it is the 5,600-odd teachers appointed by the university's constituent colleges who complain of less generous terms and conditions.

Till 1974, there was a provision for a selection grade which was equivalent to a university reader's grade and could be given to 25 per cent of the teachers in a college. It was abolished when DUTA protested that favouritism was being shown to some teachers in granting the selection grade. Since then, the teachers have been agitating for the introduction of time-bound promotions which entail automatic elevation to readership after 15 years of service. DUTA has also demanded quicker promotion of teachers with outstanding work, after screening by an expert panel from outside the university.

Housing Problem: Another key demand is for better housing facilities. A Delhi University teacher gets a monthly house rent allowance of Rs 135–450. Meanwhile there are only 180 staff quarters for 5,600 college teachers as opposed to the better off university staff with over 150 houses for 1,200 teachers.

Last September, the university authorities recommended that a pr scheme be instituted by which a could be promoted, after an asse his academic work, to a higher g university also applied for an grant of Rs 4 crore for house loans. But the UGC has accepte commendations with crucial mo which the teachers find insuffic UGC directions, for instance, sp Rs 3 crore out of the Rs 4 crore on the far fewer university-appo chers, and the balance of Rs 1 the college teachers.

UGC also said that while 33 of university-appointed teache move to a higher grade, only 25 of the college teachers were to moted. The teachers are also dema restructuring of college governing and university departments to e decision-making is more democr are also agitated by the Government's strike-banning and Other Institutions Bill, which afraid will destroy their bargain Accuses Zahoor Siddiqui, for president: "The bill has been over and above the Essential Maintenance Act and the Security Act for the sinister destroying the rights of workers es the death-knell for trade vities."



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Vice-Chancellor Singh: under attack

BHAWAN SINGH

Teachers on hunger strike and anti-strike students demonstration the vice-chancellor's office: o interests

HE UGC, howe ment all DUTA UGC official: " ts fully, we s from oth: "If they acc it will cost amount w s incurred on t of the top The Vice-Chan that the univer as much as it ngh: "We sho the Education of our demands y years. Other the negotiating s the strike co s been consid the university er 21, over 1 Sharma, Janata Pa iversity Stu dharna in s house, e. ey held up tr n December 2 endance of clas Kant Sharma, hanand Colleg our right to b No doubt the but they must d of protest. T go on indefi a visible stiffe

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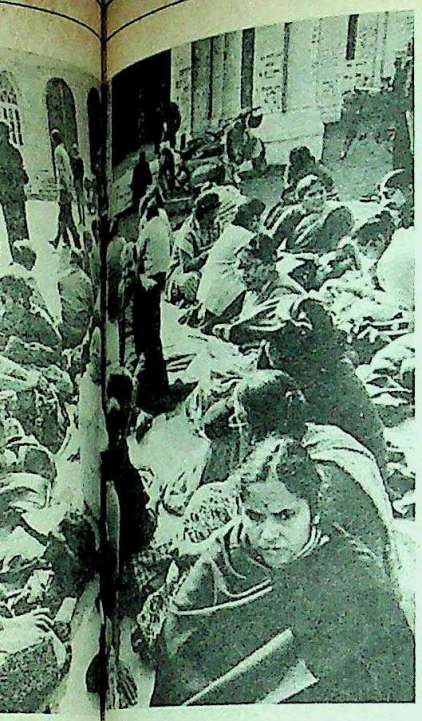

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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THE UGC, however, refused to implement all DUTA's demands. Says a UGC official: "If we accept DUTA's demands fully, we will be flooded with [illegible] from other states." Retorts [illegible]: "If they accept our promotional [illegible] it will cost only Rs 1.8 lakh an[illegible] an amount which is less than the [illegible] incurred on the fuel and enter[illegible] of the top four university off[illegible] The Vice-Chancellor Gurbaksh Singh [illegible] that the university has been able to [illegible] as much as it could from the UGC. [illegible]ngh: "We should be grateful to the [illegible] the Education Ministry for accepting [illegible] our demands which were pending [illegible] years. Other things can be sorted [illegible] the negotiating table."

[illegible] the strike continues to drag on, [illegible] been considerable bad blood wi[illegible] the university community. On [illegible]er 21, over 1,000 students led by [illegible] Sharma, president of the [illegible]a Janata Party (BJP) dominated [illegible]iversity Students' Union (DUSU), [illegible] dharna in front of the prime [illegible]'s house, requesting her to [illegible]e.

[illegible]ey held up traffic throughout the [illegible] December 28 to protest against [illegible]ndance of classes by teachers. Says [illegible] Kant Sharma, president of the [illegible]chanand College Students' Union: [illegible] our right to be taught by the tea[illegible] No doubt their demands are ge[illegible] but they must evolve some other [illegible] of protest. This kind of business [illegible] go on indefinitely."

[illegible] a visible stiffening of posture against the academic community, an emergency meeting of the Delhi University Executive Council adopted a resolution by 13 to 3 on January 2, warning the teachers to return to the classes or face punitive action. Although the resolution did not specify any action, later events haven't indicated a softening of attitudes.

Political Factors: Undeterred by such threats, the teachers have continued since political considerations are now determining the course of the agitation. With DUTA elections due in July 1983, none of the dominant political groups is willing to come out openly against the strike. Arun Bose, the DUTA president who was elected with the support of the CPI, the CPI-M, the Congress(S) and other forces against the Rashtriya Swyamsewak Sangh (RSS) sponsored candidate in 1981, resigned because his call for the withdrawal of the strike was not heeded. Even the CPI-M which favoured calling off the strike in November reversed its stand in December.

Again while the BJP-dominated DUSU is pressing for termination of the strike, the BJP members, who are in a minority in the 22-member DUTA executive, are interested in the continuance of the strike to embarrass the ruling party on the eve of the scheduled elections to Delhi's Metropolitan Council. In fact when Bose resigned, BJP leaders took over the entire campaign and went from college to college canvassing in favour of the strike.

Fresh Dialogue: Clearly, however, the sustained pressure has not borne fruit. Probably aware of the fact that the continuation of the strike may be an issue in the February poll, the ruling party at the Centre last fortnight resumed the dialogue for a solution. Conceding DUTA's six-week-old request for an appointment, Union Minister of State for Education Sheila Kaul invited DUTA office-bearers for negotiations on January 5, 1983. In this meeting attended by the UGC and Education Ministry officials, it was decided to direct the university to work out the financial implications of the DUTA's demands and forward them to the UGC and the Education Ministry.

Later in the evening, university authorities changed their stand of initiating punitive action which had been contemplated earlier against the teaching community. The vice-chancellor, who had convened an emergency meeting of the Executive Council (EC) on January 5, presumably for imposing wage cut, adjourned the meeting without taking up any business on the plea that the DUTA was in touch with the authorities.

However, in a situation of continual flux, an EC resolution on January 13 passed by 13 of its 16 members, with two teacher-members dissenting decided to impose a wage cut on all striking teachers if they did not resume duty by January 17. Deciding on the punitive action in view of the adverse impact of the strike on students, EC members opined that the authorities had done enough to resolve teachers' problems. With the DUTA condemning this action as repressive and determined to fight further, the deadlock continues.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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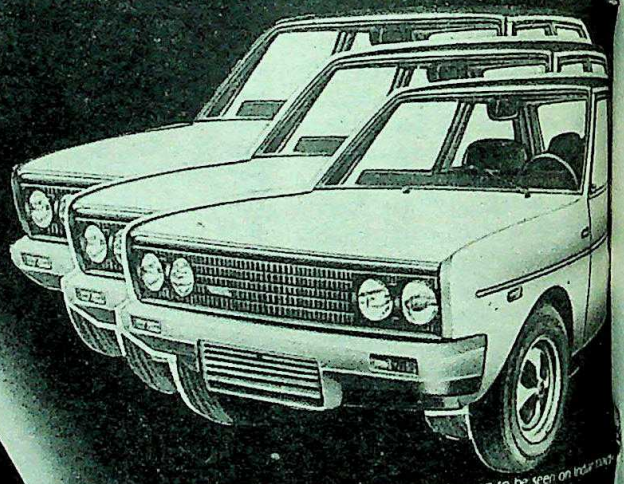

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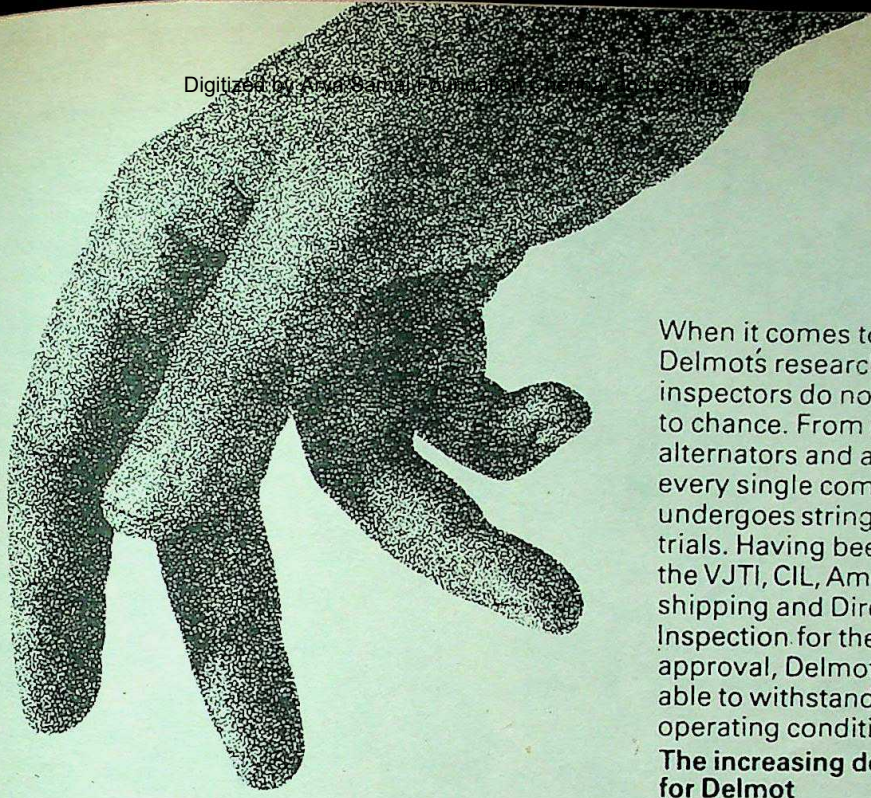

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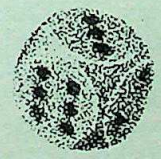

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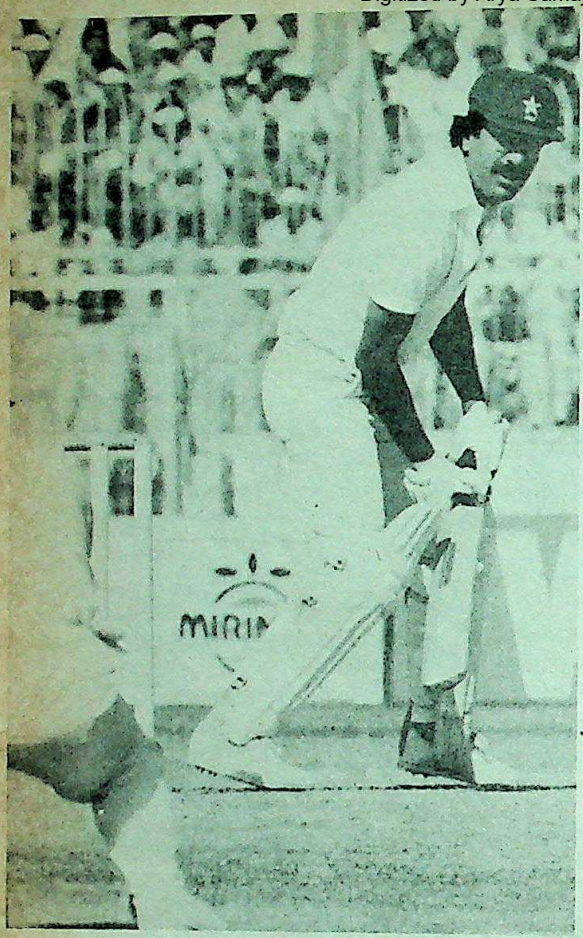

Abbas (left) on the way to his fourth consecutive century against India, and Miandad being congratulated by enthusiastic fan

FAISALABAD TEST

An All Round Thrashing

FAISALABAD, named after king Faisal of Saudi Arabia, is anything but a Test centre. Originally it was called Lyallpur, perhaps the only industrial town in Pakistan, thriving on textile manufacturing, to earn such flowing tributes as "Manchester of Pakistan". But a visit to Faisalabad would soon dispel all these beliefs. Having played there in 1978, I can't recollect playing a Test match in a worse environment. Almost every touring side has complained about such substandard locations in Pakistan. These are, in fact, major hazards of touring that country. Of course, we also have such places in our own country like Batala, Qadian, Nakher, but they are not Test centres.

If my criticism of Faisalabad sounds unjustly harsh, you should hear some of the Pakistani players. It wasn't without reason that most of them decided to spend the 'rest day' in Lahore. The playing and living conditions in Faisalabad are simply unbearable. The commissioner of Faisalabad division, I am told, worked extremely hard to give some shape to the Iqbal Stadium. But still the "up-country" atmosphere prevails which is most certainly a "turn-off" for the modern Test cricketer.

That, however, does not explain the disastrous performance of the Indian tourists in the third Test. In 1978, I was quick to announce Faisalabad as a graveyard for bowlers and even made an oral will that I should be buried there. The Australian Dennis Lillee wanted the adjacent spot!

Except for a bit of grass to make the graveyard look like a park, the basic character of the Faisalabad wicket [illegible] placid. Whatever little freshness th[illegible] on the first morning. Imran wa[illegible] make use of through his own gre[illegible]ty with the ball. In any case, he s[illegible] be obsessed with the idea of fielding [illegible] One of these days, this strategy is go[illegible] backfire. But the Pakistani captain [illegible] much confidence in himself and [illegible] team that he doesn't consider an[illegible] gamble or vice versa. He is alw[illegible] sure of what he is doing, which t[illegible] further away from his detractors.

The Doldrums: As for the ga[illegible] Indians did very well to total 3[illegible] first innings. Not a match-winni[illegible] by any standards, but good en[illegible] settle for a draw. It was good [illegible] glimpse of Vishwanath's artistry [illegible] gerent Sandip Patil-Kapil Dev pa[illegible] and then a more reassuring con[illegible]

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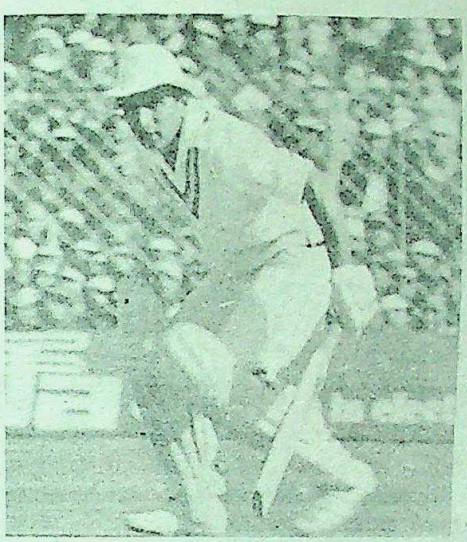
...mani and Madan Lal saw India out ...doldrums. But were they really? ...made early breakthroughs getting ...Mohsin and Akhtar cheaply. Then a ...diving catch by Kirmani ended ...ar's front-footed existence. And ...this the end of the Indian success

...rom the moment Javed Miandad ...Zaheer Abbas got together till the ...they left after completing individual ...ds, the Indian attack looked any-...our Test class. Then Imran and ...Malik took over and further ground ...less Indian bowlers with two more ... Young Malik was particularly ...ive. I would rate him the best ...ng batsman in the world, and we ...ing to hear a lot about him in the

...kistan's huge score of 652 must ...ited the home crowd, but it was ... drab affair. There was no contest ...ver between the bat and the ball. ...ally, Indian bowling resources are ...in, but a lack of purpose and will ...t were two glaring shortcomings on ...t of the Indian bowlers.

...s that the Indian team ...signed themselves to ...'s leather-hunt. The In-...eam to think that they ...capable of getting him ...member Zaheer's dis-...r of India when he ...vinced that a spell had ...ck on him. Now, a si-...spell seems to be hove-...r the Indian bowlers.

...rely as a matter of ...: Kapil Dev is our ...t one strike seamer and ... our number one spinner. I don't think either of them is aware of the roles they are expected to play. Kapil did manage to get seven wickets but at what exorbitant cost. Obviously, an open chat between the Indian captain and his bowlers is long overdue. Both parties need to renew their faith in each other. Much as I admire both Zaheer and Miandad as world class performers, I'd like to see them work for their runs. For Test matches, if closely contested, add stature to this noble game.

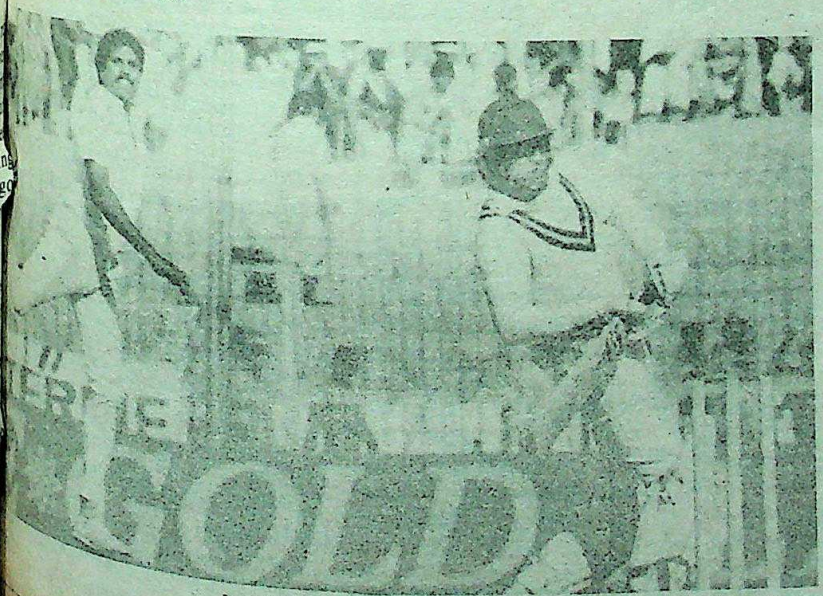


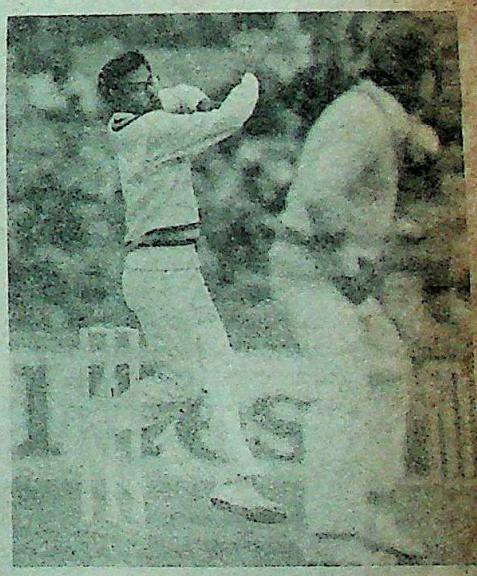
Captain Gavaskar: commendable feat

Obviously an open chat between the Indian captain and his bowlers is long overdue. Both parties need to renew their faith in each other. Much as I admire both Zaheer and Miandad as world class performers, I'd like to see them work for their runs. For Test matches, if closely contested, add stature to this noble game.

Onslaught: Facing an uphill task of eliminating a deficit 280 runs on first innings plus enduring the onslaught of Imran and Sarfaraz for nearly two days was never going to be easy. Even the easy-paced Faisalabad wicket was not a comforting associate. But still, I expected the strong Indian batting line-up to hold out. My argument was that Imran had already exerted enough—six wickets and a hundred would exhaust and satisfy anybody. But not this Pakistani captain. The storehouse of his physical energies is incredible. And the greed for personal performance second to none. When his adrenalin is charged, it remains charged for very long periods. For Imran, nothing is complete until it is total and this, for my money, is the greatest virtue of the Pakistani captain. His commitment to Pakistani cricket is total and his commitment to beat India (almost single-handedly) is even greater.

For the sake of records, India were bowled out a second time for 286 with Gavaskar carrying his bat in the course of his 26th Test century. A remarkable feat indeed by the Indian captain, sad though that he had to finish up on the losing side. Mohinder Amarnath too offered some stiff resistance to the Pakistani bowlers. But the rest of the Indian batting lacked character and resolution.





India's strike force, Kapil Dev (left) and Dilip Doshi: lack of purpose?

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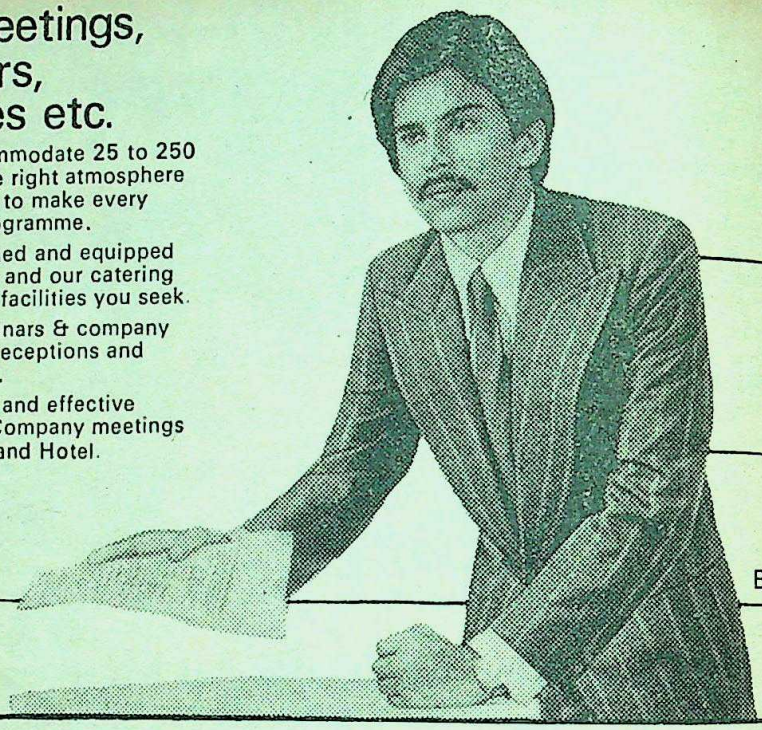

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"We are a far superior side than the Indians. I can't see them coming back into the series at all. They are a thoroughly demoralised unit and I'd hate to know their plight in the West Indies where they are going to be slaughtered."

— IMRAN KHAN

picked up five more to finish the most Test match of his and also the Man Of Match for the second running. Once again, were outclassed in department of the It would be difficult gine that the visitors' is high under such circumstances.

Umpiring: Even before started, it was inevitat the question of would come in for scrutiny. Well, everyin Pakistan and India knows even a bit of is talking about cricmpiring in general and and Pakistani umpiparticular. I am re to be drawn into any of unpleasant argubut I have no hesitasaying that except for umpiring elsewhere the wrath of touams, particularly when up losers. Lately, me English umpires ed to get a clean visitors. The pro grave and no solurdily forthcoming. I cricket administraover the world are

the present, Indians been outclassed so that I am reminded of Gavaskar's statement a of years ago, "Pakiwould beat us to some prophecy that! present circumstances, be futile to comout a few bad deciet the discontentthe Indian dressing annot be brushed gently. But, on the other hand, batting might have induced some dard umpiring. Both in Karachi Faisalabad, I don't think we helped with reckless application. and bad decisions are all a part game. But it is about time that first class cricketers of some repute subcontinent be asked to take up The disgust of the Indians at and in Pakistan is understandable, number of Pakistanis who have the integrity of their own umpires is staggering. And in all fairness to the Indian team, they seem to have one legitimate grouse—that the Pakistani umpires do not no-ball the home team bowlers as often as the law permits. Both the captain and manager of the Indian team were reasonably graceful in acknowledging that the home team played better and won.

Better Team: As for the better team itself, a day after the third Test was over, the Pakistanis were having "nets" in Lahore. I observed the victors train and practise and saw how champions are made. Captain Imran was leading by personal example. For nearly an hour or so the Pakistani captain organised a vigorous training session. Not everybody trained as hard as Imran, but they all tried, including Bari and Sarfaraz, which was enough reason for the youngsters not to be reluctant mules. It was an extremely impressive training session.

There is no doubt who is the boss of Pakistani cricket at the moment—Imran Khan Niazi. He enjoys an enviable loyal player following, and also, if need be, he lords over the BCCP officialdom, a prerogative our own 'Tiger' Pataudi used to relish with abandon.

Talking to Imran is a fairly easy exercise. He is quite open and frank and is liable to give the impression of conceit in his conversation. Says he confidently: "We are a far superior side than the Indians. I can't see them coming back into the series at all. They are a thoroughly demoralised unit and I'd hate to know their plight in the West Indies where they are going to be slaughtered." My Indian pride was hurt, but I kept my cool since I was probing the general of a victorious unit. "Right now, I think, we can take on the West Indians or any side for that matter." He repeats his oft-quoted statement: "This Indian attack will never bowl us out twice." Says he cockily: "I look at this game very positively, my main aim is to win, so I think of winning all the time. I don't see a similar attitude in any of the Indian tourists."

Of his own team-mates, he said: "Zaheer is a murderer of spin and medium-paced bowling. In his present form he is a tremendous influence on the rest of the batting." Despite Abdul Qadir's poor returns in the third Test, Imran rates the leg-spinner as a potential match winner. I don't agree with all that the Pakistani captain had to say, but the old maxim that "nothing succeeds like success" is not easy to argue against.

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TEXTILE STRIKE

The Wages Of Wrath

ON JANUARY 18 the strike by 2.5 lakh textile workers in Bombay's 60 mills will complete a year; 25,000 of these workers in eight mills have been on strike since October 1981. In every way, the lengthening strike has become a grim milestone in India's industrial history, with the opposing sides only gaining in belligerence and determination as the stalemate draws interminably on. The mood in Bombay, and in the villages where most of the workers have returned to, grows darker every day. What makes so many men fight so doggedly for so long in a battle where the odds are stacked against their victory? Correspondent CHAITANYA KALBAG *visited Bombay's textile areas and travelled through Pune, Satara, Kolhapur and Sindhudurg districts to gauge the strikers' mood and find out how the strike has affected them. His report:*

PROLONGED hardship can only gird the souls of the meekest of men with steel. Last fortnight, the mood among Bombay's striking textile workers turned darker as the 365th day of their struggle approached. It had been a long and cruel year, and the battle between the workers and the mill managements had reached epic proportions. The city's anaemic winter landscape was lanced by cold chimneys; riot squads of police at the ready patrolled the byways of Girangaon, the mills area. In the working-class chawls in Parel, Lalbag and Chinchpokli, workers who had stayed back in Bombay sat morosely in their windows, unshaven and haggard. Every day had become a battle for survival, but their spirit showed no signs of flagging.

Dattaram Laxman Salunke is a sober, quiet-spoken man, often restraining impetuous strikers who want to break out of the impasse by taking to the streets. Salunke has worked for 22 years in the 'semi' department of the Jupiter Mills in Parel. When the strike began he was earning Rs 675 a month, and supported a wife, five children, a widowed sister and his mother on that sum.

Unwavering Determination: Salunke lives in a room 10 feet by 16 feet in the Sadguru Sadan chawl in Lalbag, for which he pays a monthly rent of Rs 85. "I stayed back in Bombay," he says, "because I thought the strike would end in a couple of months. We live on *paav and usal* (rough bread and dry pulses). Many of my friends survive by selling bananas, hawking newspapers, or vending sugarcane juice."

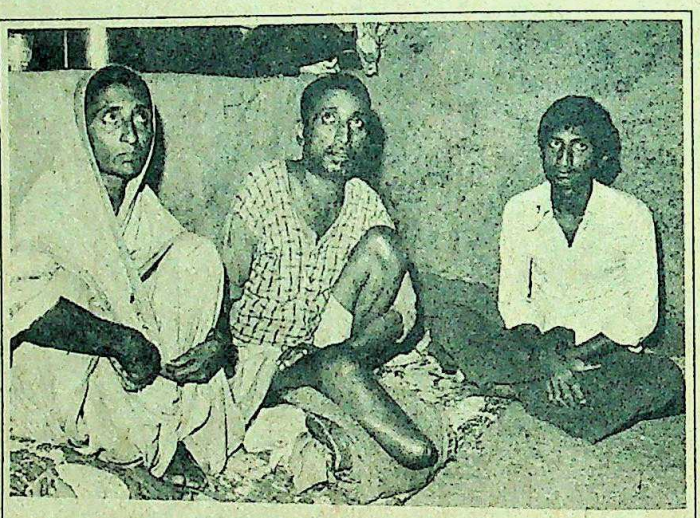
But Salunke is steadfast in his support for firebrand union leader Datta Samant, the one man most responsible for the unprecedented strike. "We are prepared to go back to work even if our monetary demands are not conceded," he says. "But the Government must recognise Samant's union as the legitimate one, and kick the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS) out of our lives."

The police in Bombay have helped harden the strikers' attitudes. Dozens of strike leaders have been arrested under the National Security Act, Section 144 has been almost continuously clamped on large areas of the city, and many of leaders have been forced to sign bo Rs 5,000 by the police, rendering liable for arrest if they so much as pate in a peaceful morcha. But the ers find ways of defiance. A mo Byculla Station is dispersed by workers silently enter the station, its platforms, and shout slogans militant songs to the accompan cymbals and *dholak*, aware that th cannot arrest them on railway prop

Sustained Morale: Most of kers staying on in have done so becau have no choice. Almo quarters of the strike returned to their villa their families. The ma the workers belong Konkan coastal belt, live in sizeable pocke districts of Pune, Sa Kolhapur—known 'Desh' belt. Samant's rashtra Girni Kamga (MGKU) by itself wou have been able to sus strikers' morale in the That job has been done by the cadres of Nishan Party (LNP), sed Maharashtrian from the national co movement born dec and by its labour aff Sarva Shramik Sangh.

The exodus countryside has be single most important have helped the work out against a settlem survive in the village making do with income paltry land-holdings hard labour. The brought them closer to their fam many clearly enjoy the break expatriate lives in Bombay's chawls. There are over 10,000 Bhor taluka of Pune district, "Most of them don't have chappals or cloth caps," says Ghone, general secretary of Kamgar Union, "but they are

The rainfall has been very year in most parts of Maharas the semi-drought conditions ha ned the workers' situation. In



NAVIN RAI

"The RMMS men tell me I will get police protection if I return to work, but how much can they protect me? A kilometre from the mill gates I will have to face strikers."

—KRISHNA BHONDURE, Bamhanghar Village

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20 km from Bhor, workers have working at survival since the strike Their jobs in Bombay's mills had their standards of living; now they had to return to their roots.

Precarious Existence: At Bamhanghar, Bhaosaheb Bhikole, who has worked in the weaving section of the Shreeniwas Mill in Bombay for 30 years, is supervising the earth-filling of a new for the village dispensary. "Our land is unirrigated and rain-fed," he say, "the harvest has been poor this year. Bombaywallas have used our spare to repair our houses, and now we are doing voluntary labour to improve village."

Many of Bamhanghar's strikers eke precarious existence by working in government's *rozgar hami* (employment guarantee) scheme, doing manual labour on roads or embankments for wages of Rs 3. Some of them get a daily wage of Rs 8 working on a richer farmer's land. "We've even sent bags of jowar to feed our children in Bombay," says he proudly.

Information constantly reaches many of the strikers in villages. Krishna Bhondu-Shingre, a spinner in the Bharat Mills, lies emaciated and speechless in his dark hut in Bamhanghar. His right leg was amputated below the knee soon after the strike began and it developed septicaemia. Bhondure's wife and mother soon scrape together Rs 1,000 between them, but his parents having had to give him apprenticeship in a workshop in order to return to the village with his family. Said a despondent relative: "The RMMS men tell us to get police protection if we go to work, but how much will it protect me? A kilometre from the mill gates I will have to be careful."

Resistant Struggle: The countryside at Asangaon, 20 km from Satara seems to reflect the mood of the textile workers. Rocky and barren, interrupted occasionally by ragged patches of ragi, wheat and groundnut. In the fading dusk, around 40 textile workers near Shankar Patil's hose to discuss the strike. Dressed in shorts, shirts and Gandhi caps, the men talk voluntarily about their struggle. They echo each other in their conviction that the Government and the millowners are out to destroy them.

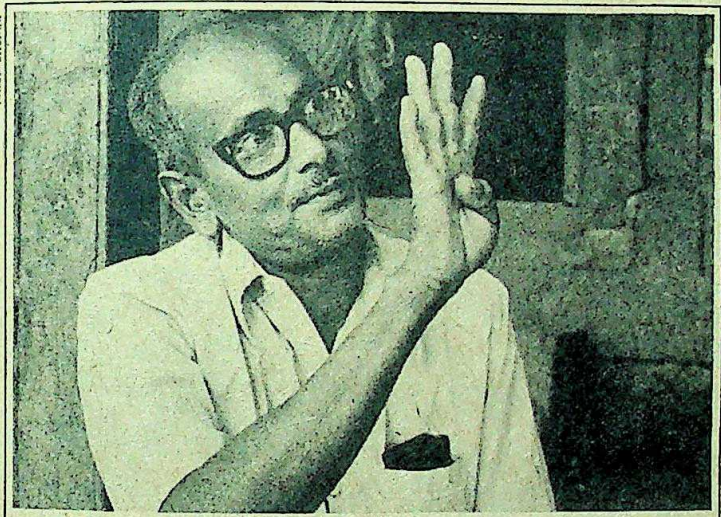
Patil operates four Sulzer looms in the Bombay Dyeing Textile Mills; he has been travelling constantly through the district, whipping up support for the strike in every gram panchayat. And Patil does not have to try very hard—the workers are very clear about their reasons for striking; "I earn Rs 1,200 a month and produce 1,600 metres of cloth in one eight-hour shift," says Patil, "but I am doing much more work than I used to before my mill modernized. How much money does the customer pay for that cloth? Where is all the profit going? We cannot surrender to the Government, because if we do we will be harassed forever afterwards." Patil and other activists of the MGKU have ensured that on January 18, the strike's anniversary day, and on Republic Day, thousands of strikers will collect in Satara to take a black-flag demonstration to the collector.

Across the Western Ghats from Kolhapur is the village of Karool, where the mood is indicative of the strikers' rigid stand throughout the vital Konkan region, which supplies skilled workers to the mills' weaving, drawing-in, sizing, folding and spinning departments. Karool's rough lanes dip and rise with the contours of the rocky land it stands on. Every striker in the village has reached out to the others, and together they form a community of opinion. Dhondu Shingre, who has worked in the ring-spinning department of Modern Mills for 30 years, says that the strike has gone on for so long only because each worker is willing to share whatever he has with the others. "Even the most apolitical worker knows and understands his own deprivation," he says. "We did not need Samant to tell us that. We had been mentally preparing to go on strike for two years before we actually did."

Inspiring Leadership: The strike has also gone on for so long because of some help from the union. Samant says that over Rs 2 crore have been collected from his long roster of engineering and chemical unions and distributed among the strikers. At least once last year over 70,000 strikers collected a dole of Rs 50, and regular distribution of rice and wheat in Bombay's working-class areas has helped many strikers immensely. Moreover, with Samant's help, unions sympathetic to him in other industries in Bombay have provided temporary employment to thousands of strikers.

Baban Kolte is a thin, wiry encyclopaedia of resentment about the condition the workers find themselves in. "I get only five days of casual leave every year—if I work a minimum of 240 days," he says angrily, "and I earn only Rs 725 after all these years, whereas the most unskilled worker in the Guest Keen Williams factory at Bhandup earns Rs 1,045 a month. I was an acid machineman once, and handled acid every day, but the millowners could not provide me with a pair of hand-gloves. This strike means everything to me now. Nobody else in India will be allowed to go on strike if we fail."

The strike's long duration has also helped the workers take a longer view of their futures. Gangaram Valanju in Karool has not been able to do any manual labour because of poor health. But sitting on his porch of packed mud, he says he would not mind quitting his job if the millowners paid him all his dues. "We are fighting not only for ourselves, but also for the next generation of workers," he says. "Why did we choose Datta Samant? Because there was no



NAMAK BHOJANI

"Even an apolitical worker understands what he does not get. We had been preparing to strike for two years before we actually did."

—DHONDU SHINGRE, Karool Village

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other leader in sight before him."

Everywhere, the strikers are adamant that they will not go back to Bombay until Samant asks them to. Samant has acquired a messianic tinge in the strikers' conversations, and signs of his hold are apparent at his home in the middle-class housing colony of Pantnagar in Ghatkopar, a Bombay suburb. Dozens of workers stand around waiting patiently for a moment with the union leader; while he works from behind a crescent-shaped desk, a bunch of petitioners stand outside the door, shifting from one foot to another and waiting for the buzzer to summon Samant's peon. Everything in the waiting area speaks of Samant's successes—the glass-panel aluminium door to his office, the watercooler in a corner, the framed photographs of Samant signing agreements with managements—all inscribed gratefully by the workers who have donated them.

SAMANT's popularity has baffled Bombay's millowners, but the truth is that the strike has gradually radicalised the union leader's posture. Last month, with the textile strike looming over the industrial world, Samant signed some of his quickest and best wage agreements with Bombay managements; at Bayer the workers got a flat raise of Rs 500 and a minimum salary of Rs 1,500, at Firestone they got a raise of Rs 600 and an average salary of Rs 2,400, and at Advani-Oerlikon they got a raise of Rs 450 and an average pay of Rs 1,600.

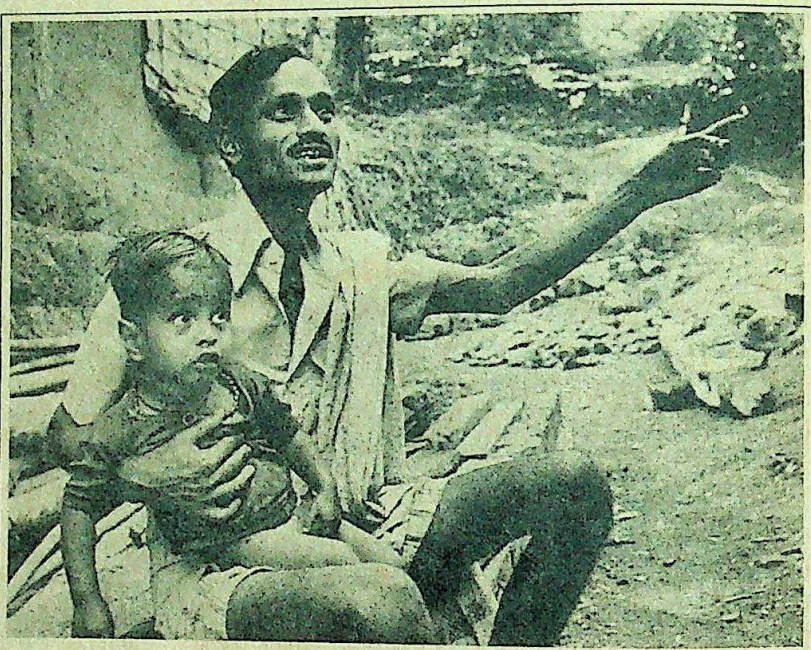
Such news travels quickly to the villages where the textile strikers are holding out. At Karool, Shingre points out that all the 150 strikers in the village are confident of an eventual victory precisely because of Samant's track record. Yashwant Lad says he has gained confidence because so many thousands of workers are also with him. "I have small children so I am certainly worried about the future," he says. But village life has mellowed his initial anger, and he is now ready for a "permanent" strike. "In Bombay I used to wait anxiously for payday, the 10th of the month," he says. "Now I don't."

Much of the strike's success is due to the animosity the workers bear towards the RMMS, a hatred that has gained strength over the years. A creation of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act (BIR Act), 1946, the RMMS is the sole bargaining agent for the workers, but it has time and again signed 'rationalisation' and work-force-reduction agreements with individual millowners, never gone on strike, prevented secret balloting to determine its exact popularity, and created tension by making sure its members get more pay and work less than the others. *Badli* (temporary) workers, who comprise 40 per cent of the mills' workforce, have to pay the RMMS a cut from their pay every month if they want to retain their jobs. RMMS officials virtually act as surrogate management representatives, cracking down too harshly on shopfloor dissent or even unpunctuality. In 1981, for instance, although many mills declared bonus payments of 12.5 per cent and 20 per cent, the subtracted a minimum of 2.5 per bonus from each worker's Diwali

Unpopular Union: The reve against the RMMS has leapfrogge November last year. To begin w though the RMMS's effective mem lists showed that its members dropped from 38,281 in December 18,032 in January 1982 to a pathe in February 1982, a month after th began, Additional Registrar of Tra ons S. Bhattacharjee ruled on Nove that the RMMS nevertheless co be the rec union because not in a posi collect fees fr members on acco the "economic ship" of the workers.

Then, after th lowners put out a ener for Diwali sing an 8.33 pe bonus for 1981 "advance" that together add up 2,500 at the dozens of state sport buses were by the RMMS to the villages to kers back. The ment ended in and RMMS acti the countrysid attacked at quite places. In De two RMMS activi were allegedly lure blacklegs were murdered Bombay.

The RMMS's sanship towards gements also through in 1974 days before S.A led a 42-day strike, the RMMS sig agreement with the Millowners' tion (MOA) for merging Rs 22.8 dearness allowance (DA) with a wage raise. To rub salt in the wounds, Dange himself abruptly the strike after obtaining paltry crements of Rs 4 for the workers years. In 1979, the Girni Kamgar led strike was called off after the got another token raise of Rs annual increments of Rs 6 for four years.



NAMAS BHOJANI

"This strike means everything to me. Nobody else in India will be allowed to go on strike if we fail; the RMMS has to go."

—BABAN KOLTE, Karool Village

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a study by the Ambedkar Institute abour Studies on behalf of the RMMS extile workers' indebtedness in 1975 ed that as many as 90 per cent of the ers had take-home wages of Rs 400 and "disposable wages" of only Rs per month on average. The work- al monthly earnings, based on the Consumer Price Index, have risen ally from Rs 134.70 in 1965 to Rs in April 1982.

ood Organisation: This time around, orkers' experience in organising e cooperative societies and committees has them in good In Bombay, the ave been grouped zones, and their committees meet ly to chalk out es. The commit- decisions are di- d in open mee- f the workers, e workers them- assess the strike n and plan fur- grammes.

ta Samant him- timates that 10 t of the workers er return to en if the strike end. Last fort- there were no a resumption of ns between kers and the mil- and the Go- . In late Octo- year, after a Bombay by Ministers Pranab ee, Veerendra d Shivraj Patil, ee went to the suggesting that ct be scrapped RMMS be dere- But the BIR visions, which permit any strikes whatsoever and e that only the RMMS can negotiate creases, has effectively rendered the ment's stand farcical.

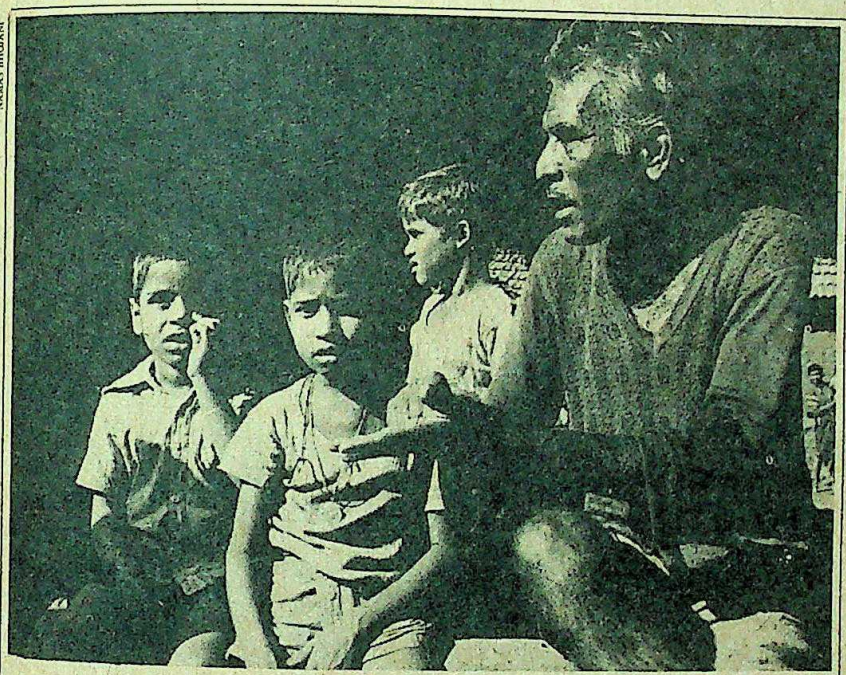
ording to R.L.N. Vijayanagar, se- general of the MOA, however, one kers of a claimed total of 1.8 lakh ow rejoined work. Vijayanagar that not more than 4,000 of these recruits, but some mills like have been advertising regularly in thi papers for new recruits, and incentives like free accommodation in the mill premises and a midday meal. Reports also indicate that weaving sections in many mills are quite well-staffed because weavers from the powerloom sector in Bhiwandi, Pen and Alibag have been imported into Bombay to counter the strike. But a textile mill is a composite chain of operations, and so long as the spinning, carding and folding departments are not sufficiently manned, production cannot take place. Vijayanagar also claims that 22 mills are now working all three shifts, and 18 are working two shifts; but he admits that against a normal production of 35 lakh metres of cloth per day, the industry is currently turning out only 14.58 lakh metres per day.

Claims Refuted: But the millowners' claims of increasing attendance in the mills were refuted last fortnight when the Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESIS) authorities in Bombay disclosed that as many as 1.69 lakh textile workers had been "disentitled" from the scheme because they had struck work.

In the longer term, however the textile strike will exert a malevolent influence on the Congress(I)'s future in Maharashtra. The snowballing antagonism towards the RMMS will affect the careers of a host of party leaders like N.M. Tidke, Balwantrao Gaekwad, Vasantrao Hoshing, Vasantdada Patil, P.K. Sawant, Bhai Bhosale, and Bhaurao Patil, all of whom have moved to larger responsibilities from the ranks of the RMMS.

Solomon Simon, a weaver in the New China Mills at Sewri, points out that in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement in 1956, which eventually led to the formation of Maharashtra and Gujarat, the textile workers had played a major role in ensuring a defeat for Congress candidates in the elections by fanning out into the villages to campaign. "We are ready to repeat history," he says. "Whenever the next elections are, whether this year or in 1985, we will show that the textile workers cannot be treated so callously. In 1956, 105 textile workers died during the Samyukta Maharashtra agitation. This time 10 times that number will willingly die, but the Government cannot break this strike."

There is now only a certainty that the workers owe it to themselves, and to all other workers in India, to hold out to the bitter end. The strikers have heard the rumbles of the repercussions of their fight. Many mills might close down, some might move out of Bombay altogether, and almost 80,000 *badli* workers might even lose their jobs altogether. But every struggle carries a price tag, and the textile strike, aside from causing a cumulative loss of over Rs 1,000 crore and an all-time high loss of mandays, has also spread a desolate future before the strikers. The significance of the strike in a 'Year of Productivity' has not been lost. The Government's inability to solve the crisis illustrates its effeminacy and callousness all over again. Datta Samant is only the spokesman for the strikers; the real hero is undoubtedly the ordinary worker, endowed with true grit and extraordinary resilience.



NAMAS BHOJANI

"We are fighting not only for ourselves but for the next generation of workers too. We chose Datta Samant because there was no other leader in sight before him."

—GANGARAM VALANJU, Karool Village

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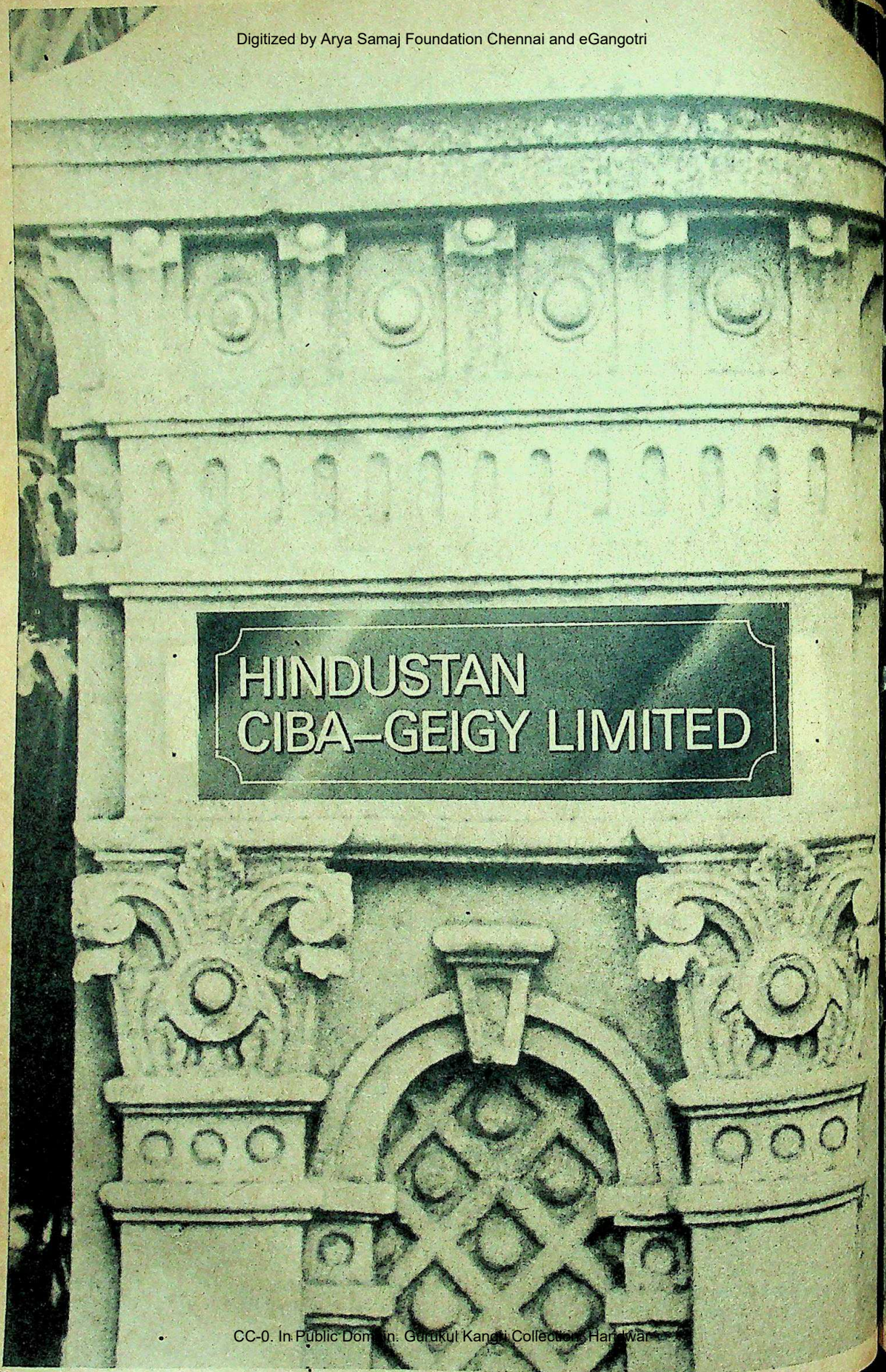

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The Tests of Citizenship

Ciba came to India as a stranger over 90 years ago. The textile industry was hungry for dyestuffs and textile auxiliaries. When Ciba (India) Limited was later incorporated in 1928, it was primarily to meet this demand. Thus the stranger became a domicile.

And the country's expectations began to grow. To fight diseases, Ciba established facilities with characteristic Swiss meticulousness to manufacture drugs and pharmaceuticals. The Ciba Research Centre near Bombay, one of the largest in this part of the world, is a permanent affirmation of this commitment.

As lifestyles of the masses began to change, Ciba-Geigy complemented this change by putting popular consumer products on the market. Around this time, industries were in urgent need of quality insulation materials, bonding agents and anti-corrosives. Ciba-Geigy stepped in —with the introduction of epoxy resins.

A scientific revolution was taking shape to modernise agriculture, the backbone of the economy. Ciba-Geigy invested in the core sector to bring agrochemicals to the farmer.

Developments took place on many fronts. Investments were made in backward areas. Exports came to represent 15% of domestic sales.

Each of these has been a test for Ciba-Geigy to closely identify itself with life in India.

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HOC has discovered a totally new branch in organic chemistry. It's called vision restoration.

HOC has always been an organic company in more ways than one. Its business is the production of over 28 vital organic chemical intermediates that go into the manufacture of important drugs and pharmaceuticals, dyes and dye intermediates, laminates, pesticides, rubber chemicals and others. Its relationship with its immediate rural environment, both with the land and the people is of an organic nature too.

Perhaps the most significant change that has occurred because of this genuine organic relationship is in the minds and attitudes of HOC's own employees. In May 1978 HOC staff initiated a Community Vision Project. Through the funds raised by the voluntary efforts of the employees, free medical treatment used to be given for minor eye-ailments. The Community Vision Project has now been made a permanent institution called Dr. Kasbekar Memorial Community Vision Trust. HOC has donated five lakhs of rupees to the Trust. Hundreds of eye operations are performed and thousands of spectacles given either free or for a token charge.

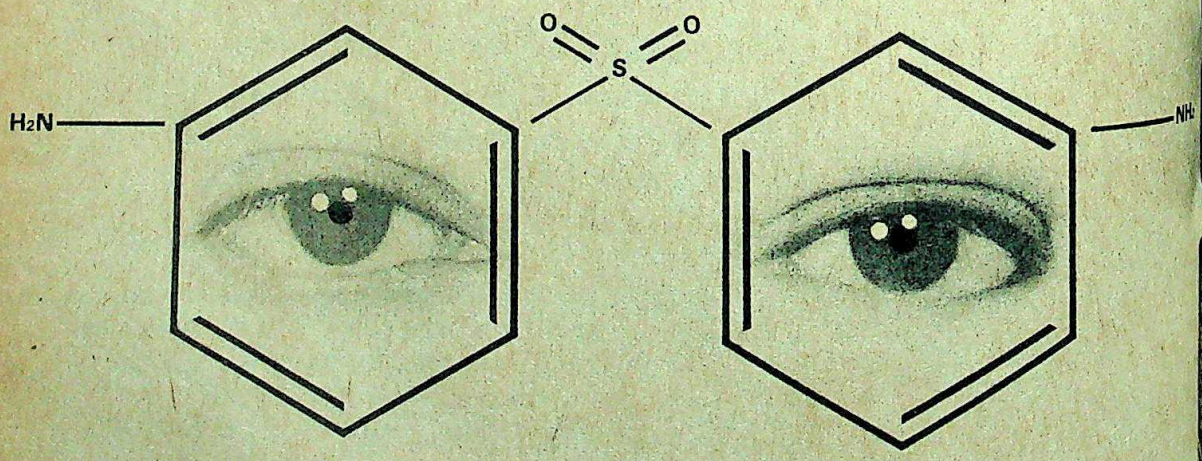
Furthermore HOC has taken over the total medi-care of 29 villages and is in the process of extending it to 15 others in the Khalapur and Panvel talukas of Raigad District. In each of these vilages HOC has appointed a trained village worker to look after minor ailments and to educate people in sanitation, hygiene and family planning. Whenever there's a more serious case which requires advanced medical care, the village worker refers the case to the HOC Hospital. Patients from the rural neighbourhood are given both outdoor and indoor medical treatment for a nominal charge (which too is waived in the case of the very poor) in HOC's modern hospital which includes intensive care unit facilities.

With so much effort expended on social welfare, how much time does that leave HOC for its business ? Plenty. Right now we have 14 highly sophisticated plants on stream with an investment of Rs. 50 crores. We are also in the process of expanding considerably the capacities of these plants.

Simultaneously work on the Rs. 50 crore Phenol (40,000 TPA)/Acetone (24,640 TPA) project along with a Propylene Recovery project at Cochin is going full steam ahead.

With its outstanding performance all round in the field of production and sales, HOC has been consistently maintaining sound financial health. On the export front the Company has bagged Chemexcil's award for its excellent performance for five years in a row. HOC's success over the years can only be explained by the spirit of harmony and shared goals among its entire work force.

A hard headed, dynamic professionalism in business and a total commitment to the rural neighbourhood have never been an either/or proposition at HOC. They are the yin and yang, the Shiva and Shakti of driving power.



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Pace setters in Organic Chemicals

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's precision compass maintains a
t tracking of record grooves even on a
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SONODYNE
RP-4000 D
India's most advanced turntable

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In The Co

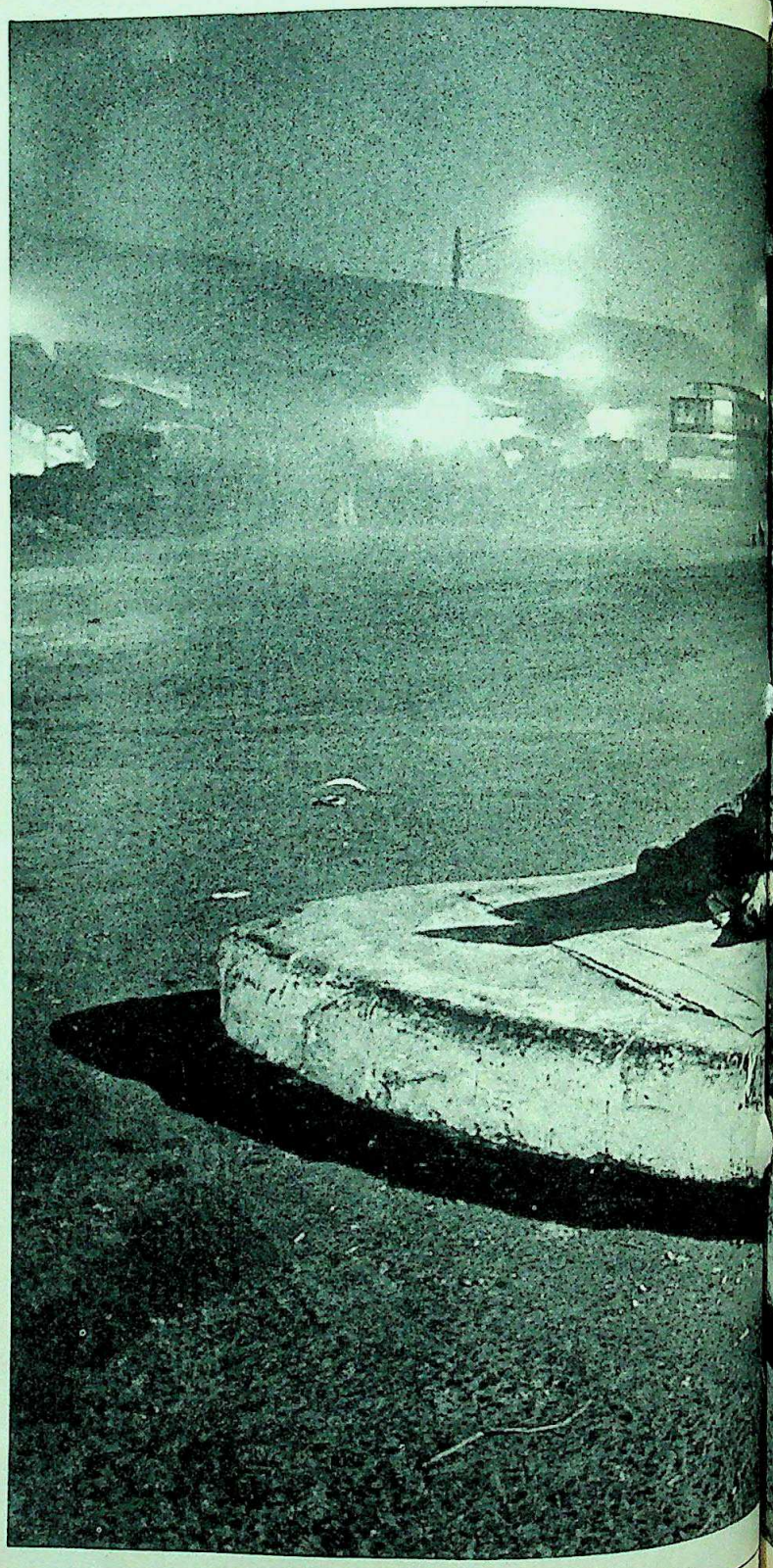
FOR NORTHERN India, trapped in the icy claws of a cold wave, it has been a winter of acute discomfort. By last week, the mercury was continuing its downward dip as inet offices all over the region registered the lowest temperatures in decades. Up in the higher reaches, snow and heavy fog disrupted normal life, cutting off huge chunks of inhabited areas from the rest of the country. Till January 13, the death toll from the cold wave in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh stood at 400.

In the capital, New Delhi, the festivities over Christmas and New Year were considerably dampened by the freezing temperatures and the fog that enveloped the city for prolonged stretches. But the truly tragic victims of the cold wave were those who had no roof over their heads and whose bedrooms are usually a piece of pavement or a vacant doorway. Over the last fortnight, New Delhi has registered an average maximum temperature of 18.4 Celsius while the minimum average has been a bone-chilling 7 Celsius.

Bitter Experience: On December 27, the maximum temperature slid to 14 Celsius, seven degrees below what is normal for the time of the year and the coldest recorded in the last nine years. For the homeless, the cold war has never been fought so bitterly. With the advent of night, their search for shelter and warmth became a struggle for survival. In parts of Old Delhi, where the only available shelter was a traffic divider, the destitute huddled together under quilts and rags or sought the deceptive comfort of doorways.

All over the city, little fires blossomed in lonely defiance as old tyres, petrol-soaked rags and bits of paper were scrounged for fuel. The warmest places were the cow stables, where the luckier ones staved off the cold by sleeping among the animals. Others found their best source of survival in railway freight yards, bus depots or under the protective arch of a bridge.

But even for the fortunate, there was no escaping the icy surface winds the intermittent flurries of unseasonal rain and the pea-soup fog that drifted across the city, driving citizens indoors and traffic off the roads. In fact, there were moments, specially in the early morning hours, when Delhi resembled a city under siege, battling an invisible army that marched silently down from the snow-clad slopes of the Himalayas.



Huddled under cotton quilts, the homeless brave the icy January winds on a traffic divider

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f The Night

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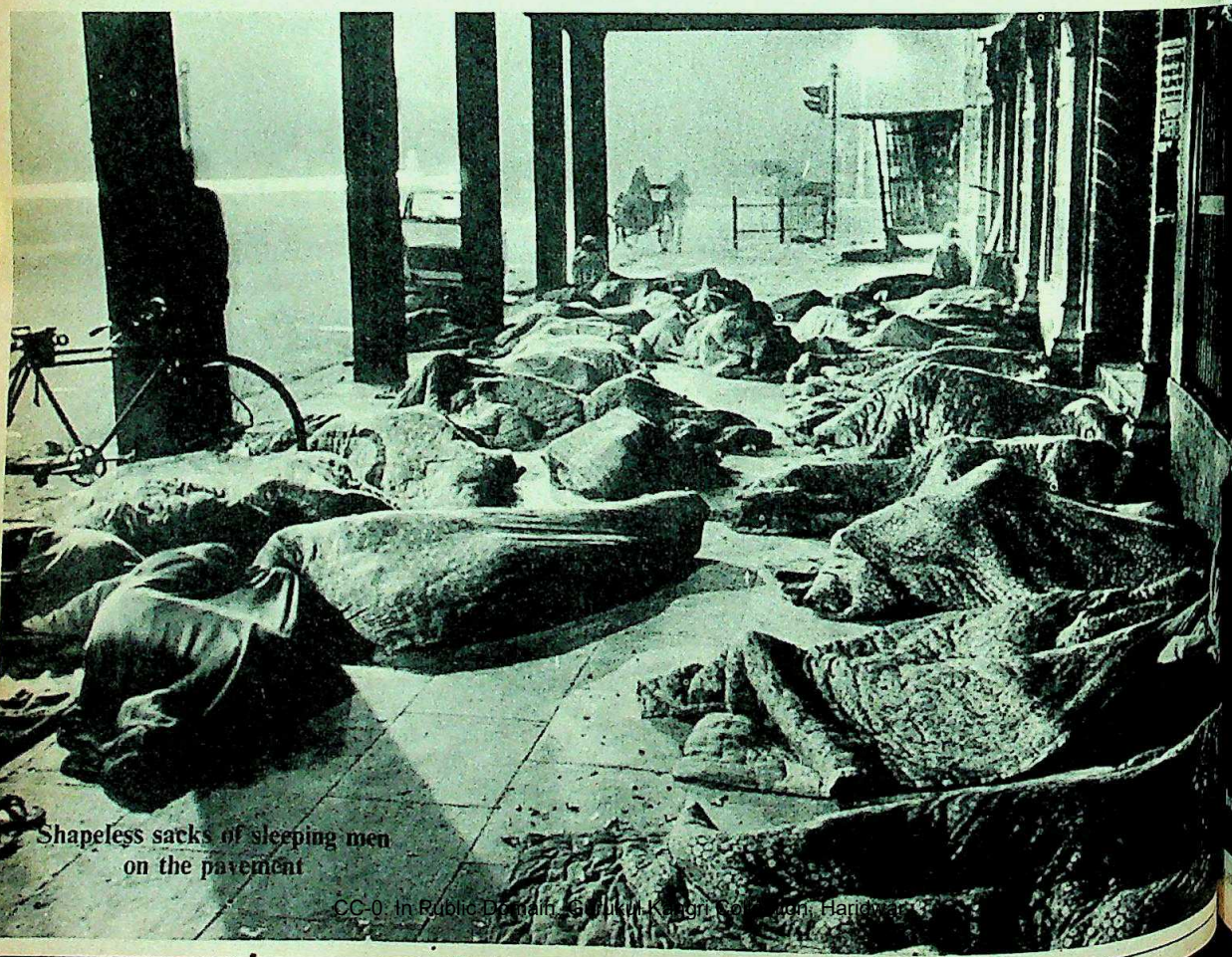
Sleepless in the chill



Shapeless sacks of sleeping men on the pavement

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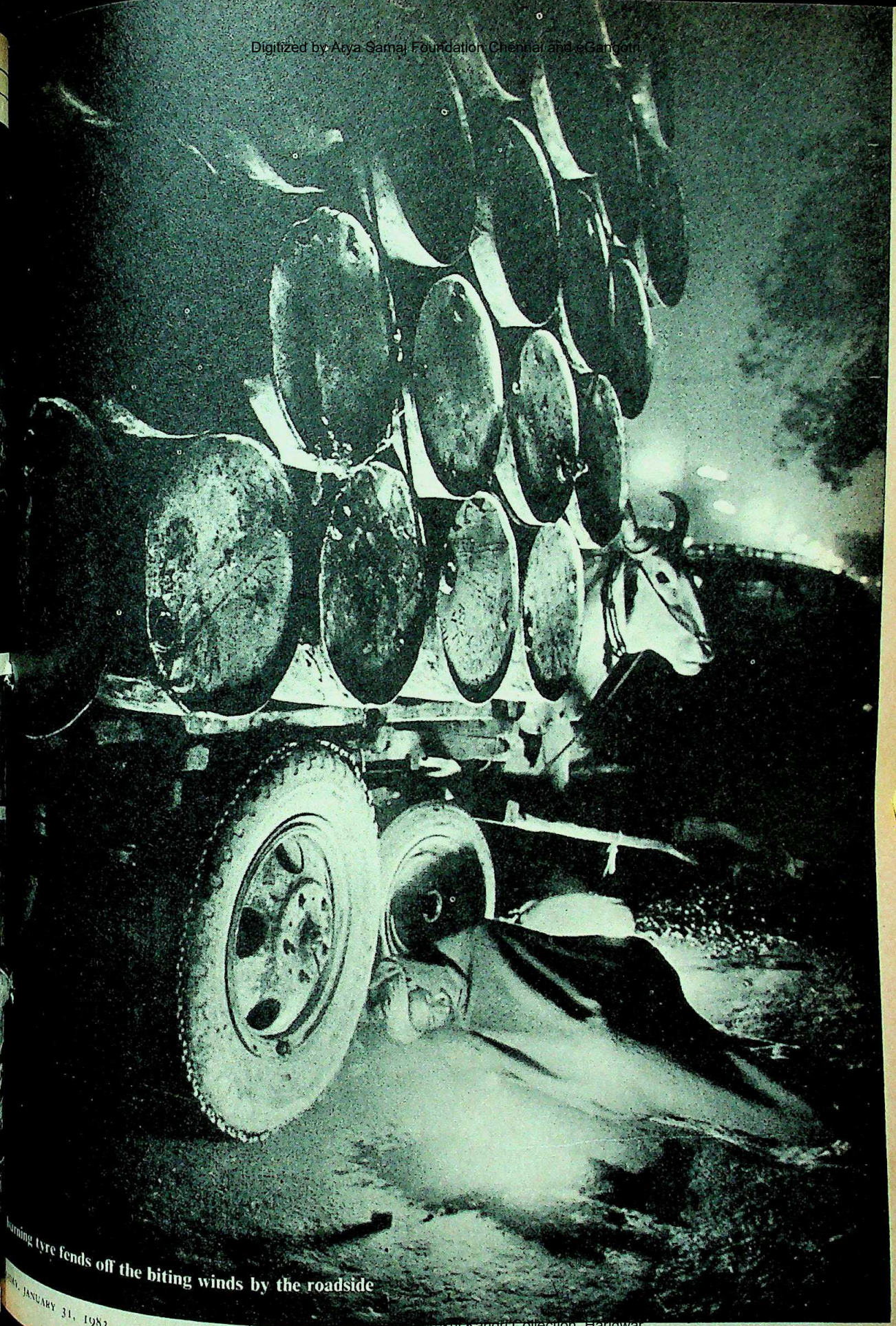

burning tyre fends off the biting winds by the roadside

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The cold bites through the blanket

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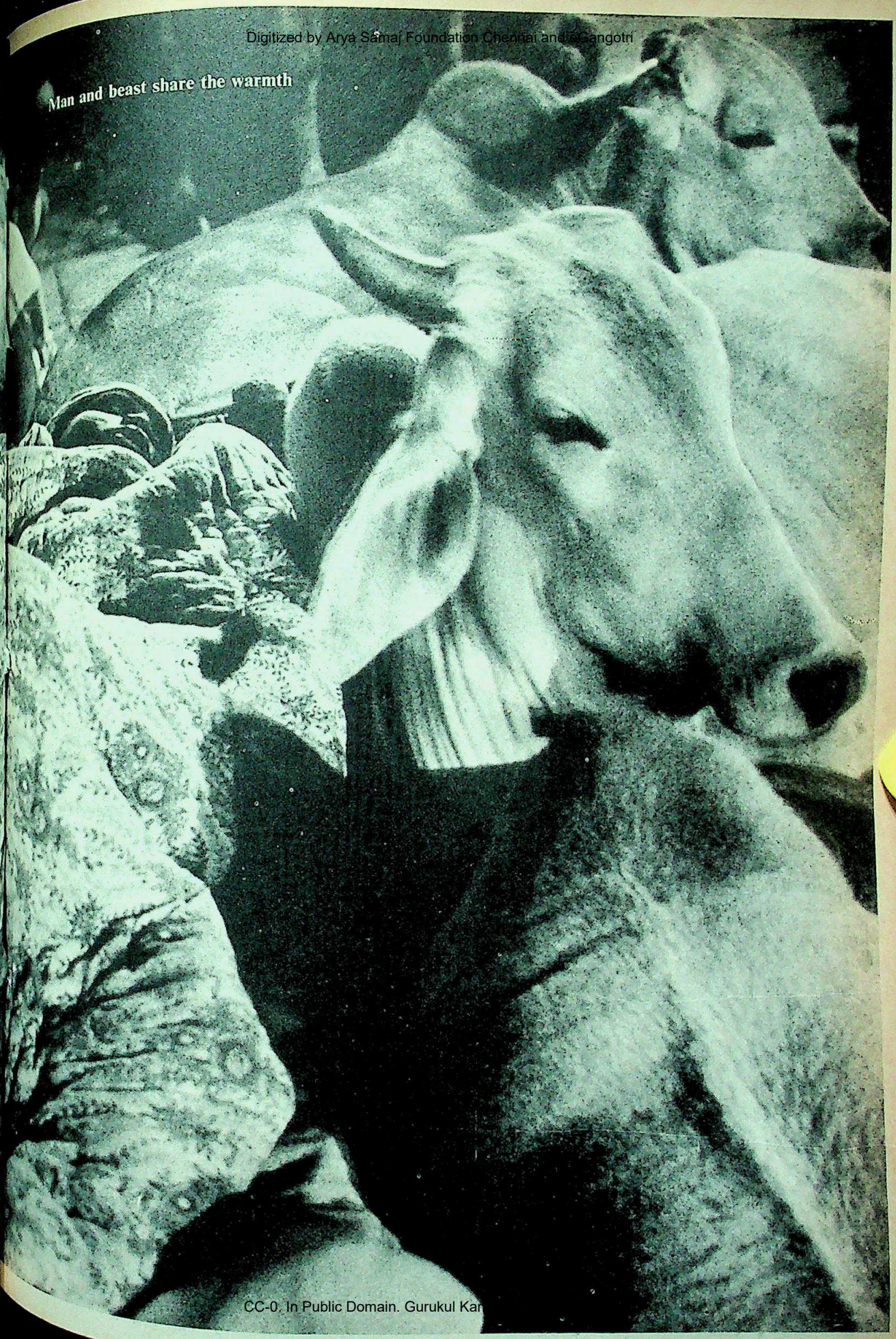

Man and beast share the warmth

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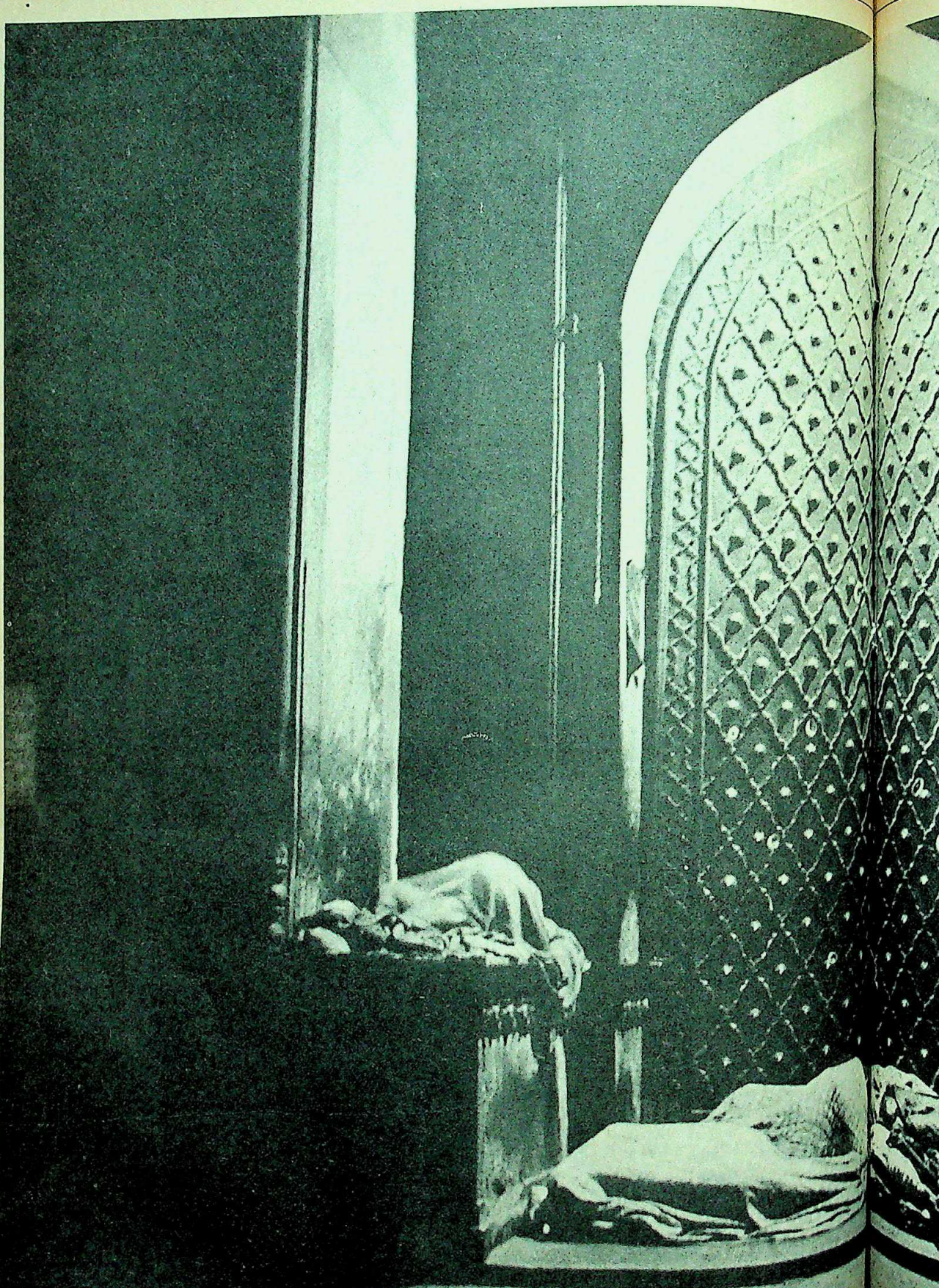

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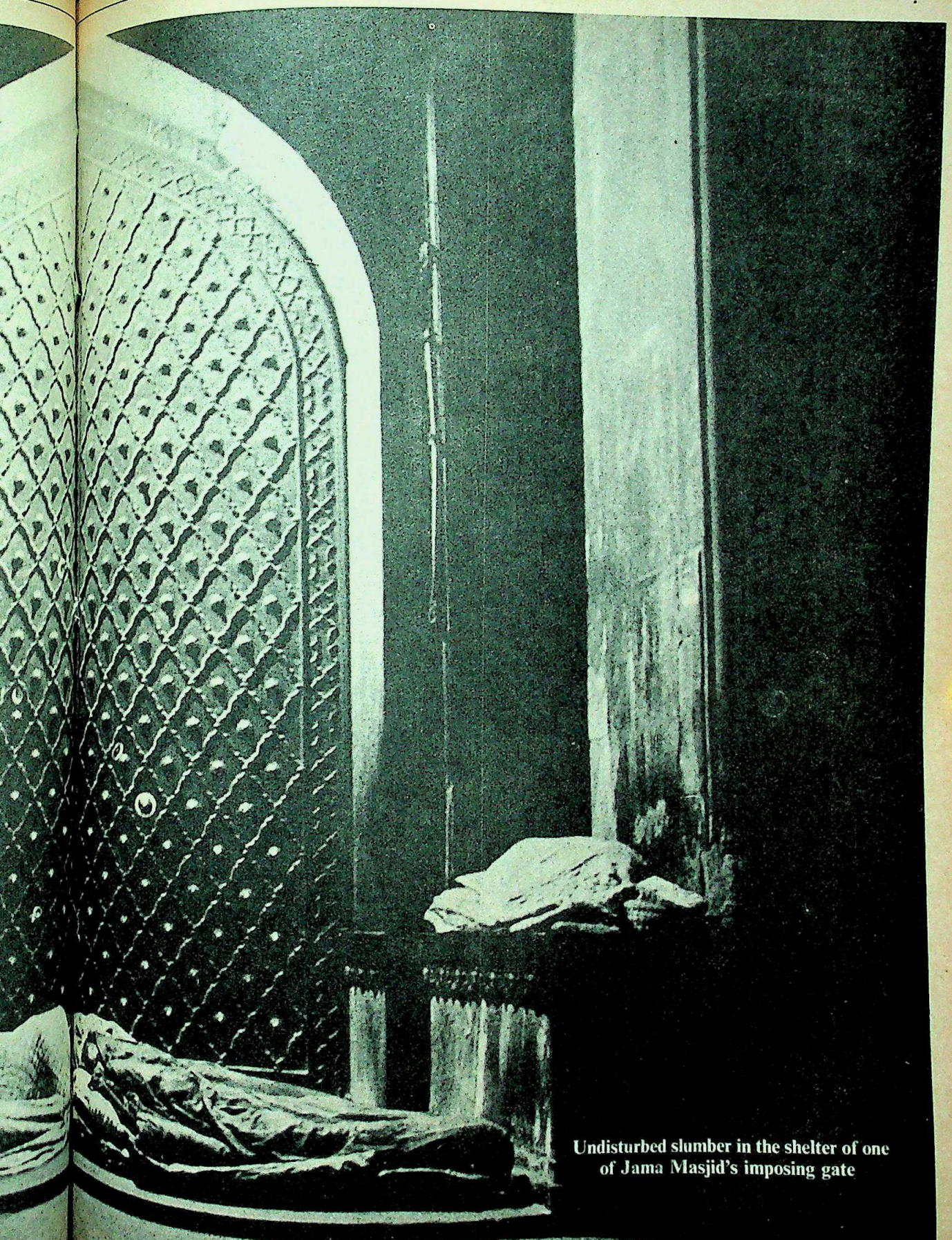

Undisturbed slumber in the shelter of one of Jama Masjid's imposing gate

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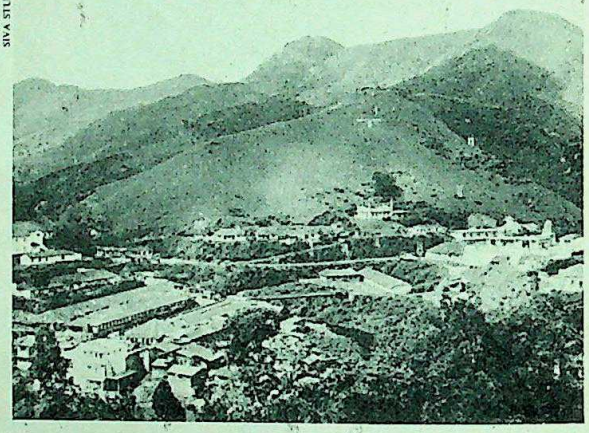
KERALA

Power Struggle

ONE OF the oldest and most beautiful hill-stations in Kerala could find itself under water if the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) has its way. Munnar is a plantation town 150 km from Cochin nestling in the high ranges of Idukki district, surrounded by impeccably maintained tea plantations and exotic gardens spread over 9,900 hectares. The sword of Damocles now hangs over this region as the KSEB proposes to build a dam that will submerge the 125-year-old township and its gardens.

With the construction of the dam, 8,000 of Munnar's 21,000 workers will be left jobless. It will also affect 5,000 families as about 3,000 hectares of tea plantations will be submerged. Most of this land belongs to Tata Finlay whose Kannan Devan tea plantation in Munnar is their largest holding in the country. Last fortnight, for the first time in the history of Munnar, the people banded together in a day-long bandh to protest the proposed construction.



SIVA STUDIOS

A view of Munnar town: tragic fate

Objectives: The KSEB plans to build the Rs 120-crore Munnar dam just below the present Pallivasal power plant, the first hydroelectric project in Kerala built by the British. According to the KSEB, hydroelectric projects have a life of 40 to 50 years and the Pallivasal's time is just about up. With the new dam, with a capacity of 240 MW, the board hopes not only to replace the previous project but also to augment the power supply in the state.

To push home this point, state Electricity Minister R. Balakrishna Pillai said: "For the first time the state has introduced a 20 per cent power cut. At this rate, to protect monkeys in Valley none of the industries in the can function." Pillai argues that the absolutely essential for the indus tion of the state and goes on to s the plantations are so old that Tata would leave it with no regrets. said that no more than 2,000 people be displaced. Revealing the KSEB's build a new township on the high above the dam, Pillai waxed eloque will be a tourist paradise like O Kodaikanal where tourism itself is ney-spinner."

"Those evicted for the Idukki are still to be rehabilitated. And the posed township will survive," shoots back National Trade Union gress leader, M. swamy. Tata Finlay, who will lose some highest yielding gard should be paid about crore as compensation tight-lipped about the The only thing that pany spokesman wou was: "It is utter non say that the tea bus old. So far nobody determined the exact tea bushes."

Pressure: But may be forthcoming another quarter. The Nadu Government has already sen ings that thousands of poor Tam form 90 per cent of Munnar's wo should not be displaced. The local MLA, G. Varadan, who is also a T that the people who were likely to affected would be poor Tam Harijans.

The people of Munnar are no ing back idly waiting for help. Apa the bandh, they have also sent to the prime minister and a dum to the chief minister ing for the township, Reverend Augustine Pinheiro said: "When is submerged it will displace 5,000 labour families which is as vast in magnitude as the bial Biblical flood." One of the Munnar said it more telling monkeys can live in Silent Va can live in Pooyakutty, canno beings live in Munnar?"

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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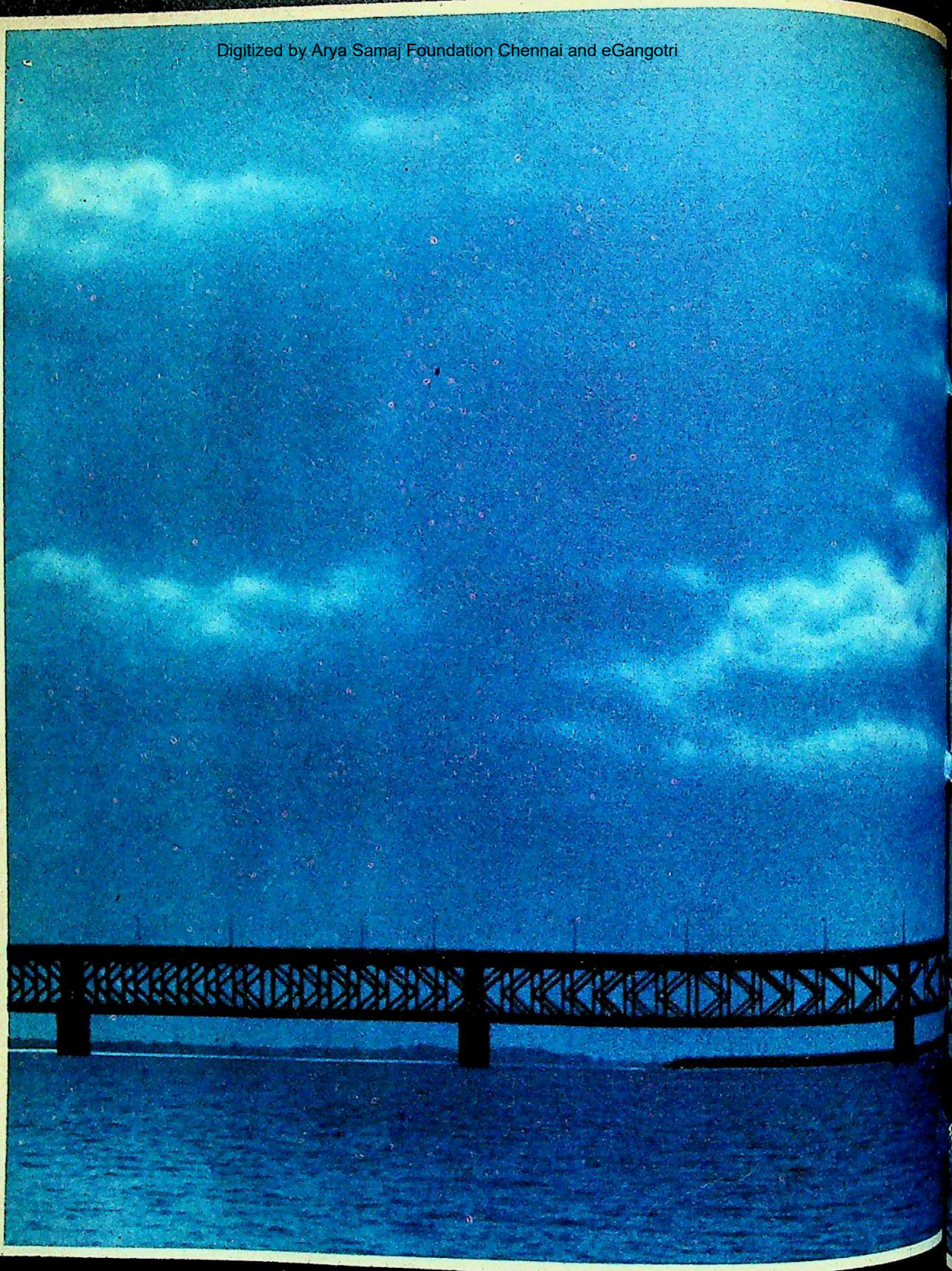

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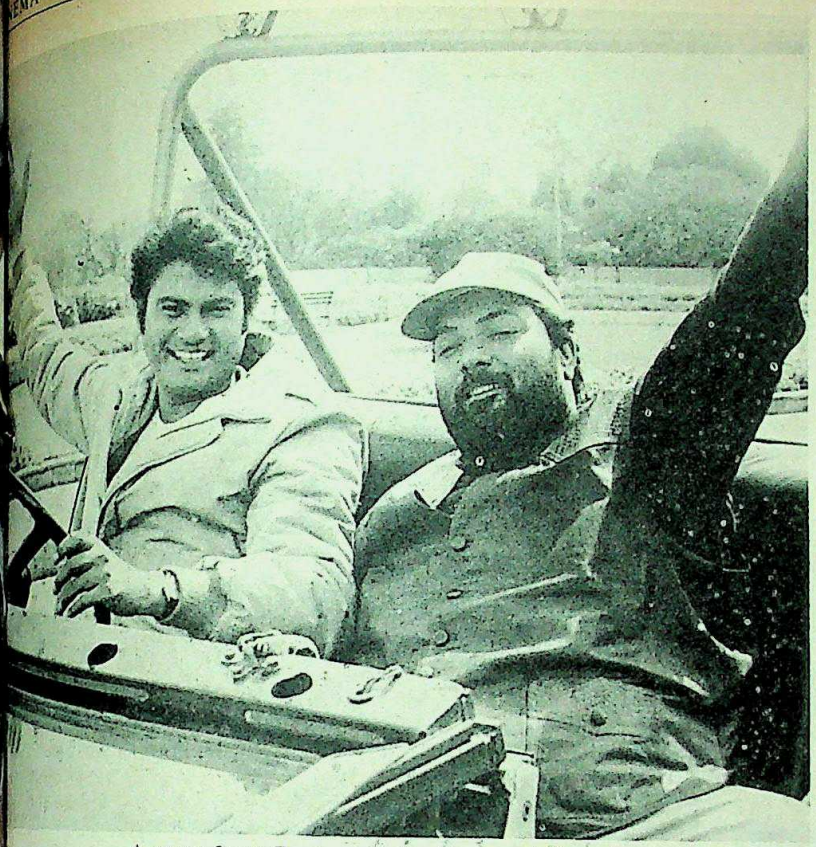

A scene from *Partner*: refreshing pot-boilers

rmula For Fun

NER

er-director: Anil Tejani
g: Kanwaljit Singh, Prem Mohan, Naval, Javed Khan, Shakti Kapoor

HEN a group of young almuni of Pune's Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) set out to that they can beat commercial at its own game, it's time to sit up e notice. And Cine Pendre, a pro- group of 15 FTII graduates led by ani, had precisely this in mind y launched *Partner*, a delightfully ing admission of the superiority formula film. Throwing all innova- d experimentation to the winds, endre has produced a film that is a to the *filmi* formula, a technically t *tour de force* in pure entertain- it is a pot-boiler with precisely mea- doses of all the right ingredients, the d pieces of romance, laughter, cabaret and everlasting friendship g into a refreshingly enjoyable

rtner is a colourful patchwork quilt nes and sequences culled from over a of Hindi film hits. Bent on undoing every commercial movie before it, producer-director Tejani has put together a lively, super-charged story of two friends who go through the gamut together: getting drunk, making lecherous passes at dancing girls, and fighting their way through discotheques and cabaret halls —but always together. A racy song in which Johnny (Kanwaljit Singh) and Ronnie (Prem Mohan) swear undying friendship, keeps up the pace for much of its first half. In an audience-wooing frenzy, *Partner* races through a provocatively titillating cabaret number, half-a-dozen fights and a longish comic act in which theatre comedian Javed Khan puts in a superb performance as a cinema ticket black marketeer.

The plot of *Partner* is only a setting for the formula themes and sequences which make up the movie, a broad framework within which Tejani takes the film through the gamut of commercial cinema. The sub-plots pile up one upon the other, but *Partner* moves along with its clean-cut aura of good fun, the mix never getting quite out of hand. All the ingredients are there: the chase of reluctant Deepti Naval and her final acquiescence, the inevitable separation when her policeman father discovers that Johnny is a black marketeer, the sub-theme of friendship too is subjected to its trials, and partners Johnny and Ronnie are oh-so-briefly estranged before they come together once more, and a vendetta between criminals which leads eventually to the final shoot-out in the climax of *Partner*.

Fast Pace: The story itself is without frills. Johnny is a small-time crook who decides to go straight when he falls in love and realises that there is more to life than selling movie tickets in the black market. Meanwhile, Ronnie who, unknown to bosom pal Johnny, is a policeman who only masquerades as a crook to expose Bombay underworld leaders, Tiger and Panther, joins Johnny's gang and begins the task of pitting the crooks against each other. A series of encounters take place between love scenes and songs and in the final confrontation the crooks try to make off with smuggled drugs after kidnapping Johnny's girl. But the partners outwit them and play the two off against each other and ultimately the crooks shoot each other while Johnny and Ronnie are left holding the contraband, money and woman.

Much of the credit for the success of the film goes to Prem Mohan, a rotund Delhi-based industrialist who plays the role of the invincible policeman-partner to perfection. Only one film old—he played a bit part in *Love Story*—and still self-consciously over-dramatic in his delivery, Mohan's acting is nonetheless ideally suited to the Bud Spencer-type role he plays. A comic muscleman who swats men off like flies, the actor-industrialist is delightful in his slapstick fight scenes.

Partner's strength lies as much in its skilfully blended mixture of prime commercial ingredients as in the pleasant impact of watching fresh new faces go through the old motions. Although it has a hackneyed and worn-out theme, and little innovation of change, the film will be remembered for at least one thing: it has proved, beyond a shadow of doubt, that a film maker can produce a top-notch commercial pot-boiler, complete with excellent songs, tense chase sequences on motorcycles and cars, throbbing cabarets and wolf-whistle fetching dialogue and this without the giant budgets, Manmohan Desais, Amitabh Bachchans, Amjad Khans, R.D. Burmans, Anand Bakshis and Salim Javeds of filmdom. Relying, except for the inclusion of Deepti Naval and Shakti Kapoor, entirely on unknown names for both actors and technicians, Cine Pendre has nevertheless turned out an excitably enjoyable movie.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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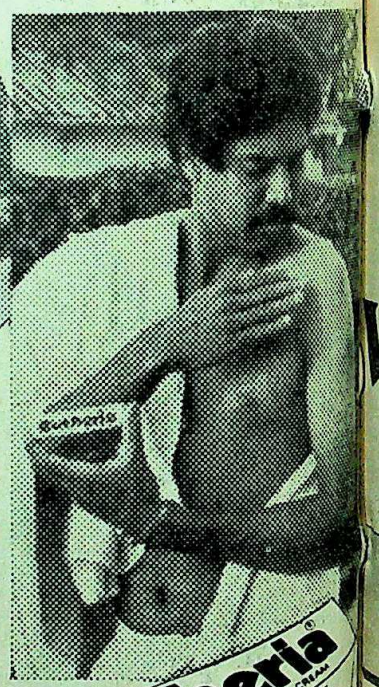

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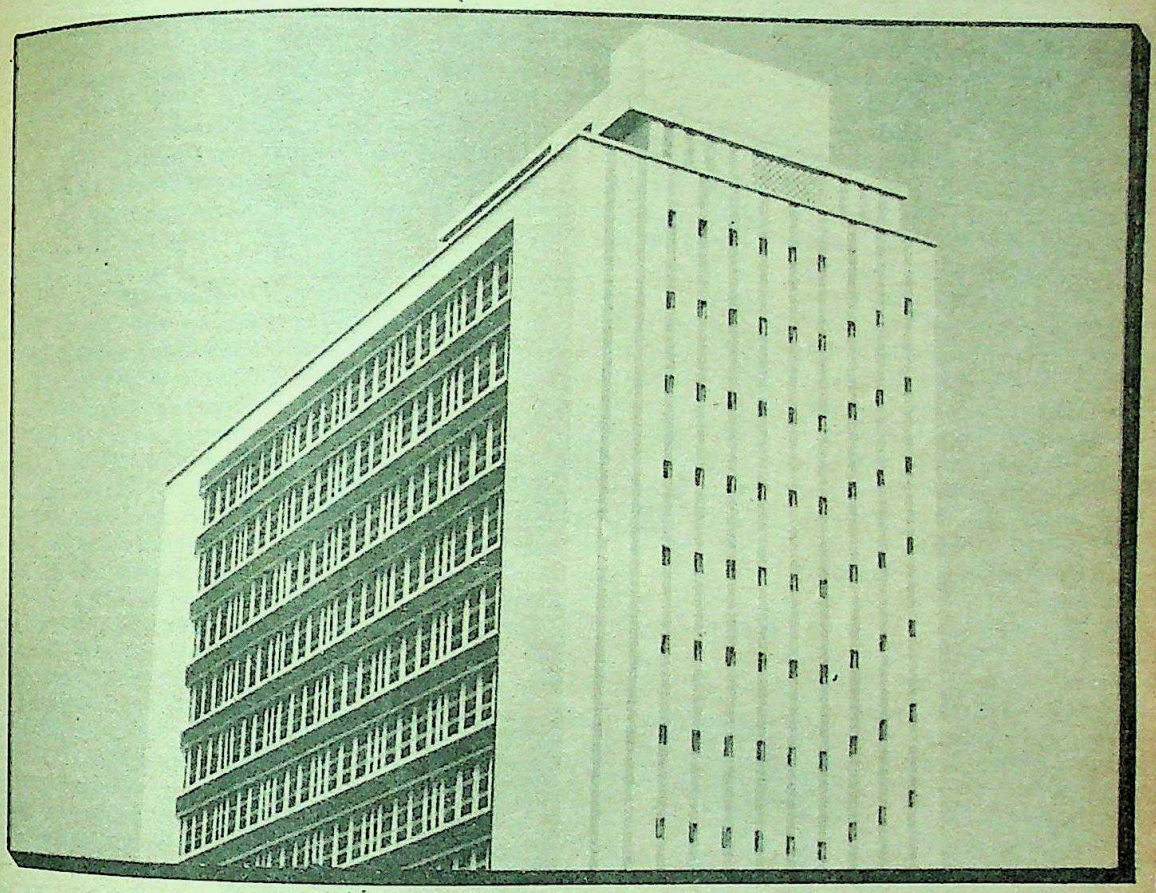

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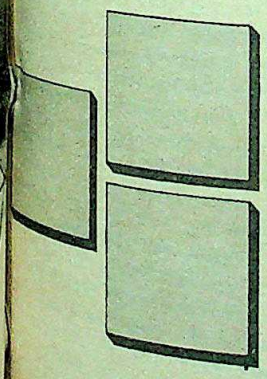

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FILM FESTIVAL

Faded Fare

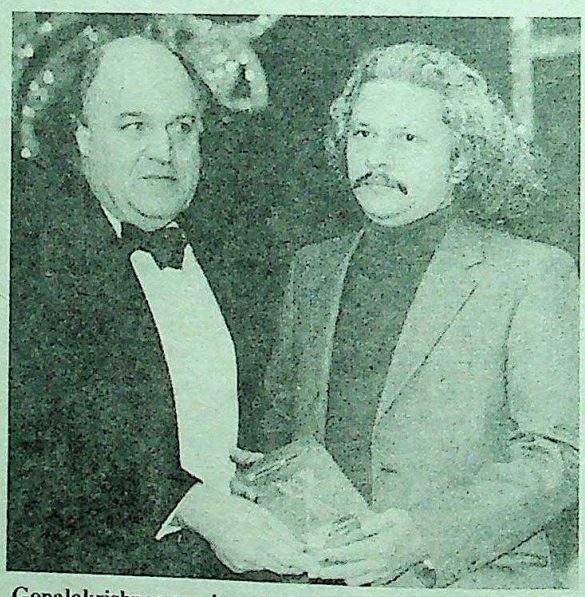
THE INDIAN Film Festival, in its ninth incarnation last fortnight in New Delhi, wasn't the most entertaining spectacle in the world: last year's decline seemed this year to have developed into a state of irretrievable loss. Compared to other international film festivals, the Indian show appears a sadly undernourished creature struggling along hopelessly, even though it has acquired a new parent.

With the amalgamation last July of the Directorate of Film Festivals with the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), the current NFDC-run festival is really nobody's baby. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting continues to call the shots when all else collapses under its crushing weight. Still, it is ironic that the secretary of the I & B Ministry should address press conferences for a supposedly autonomous festival, that ministry officials should take over from film professionals, and that savage bureaucratic warfare should result in the ouster from the Directorate of serious cineastes. As one Bombay film critic puts it: "The Delhi festival is now run for and by the babus."

The bureaucratic invasion has seemingly wrecked so much that, at last week's end, even the distinguished chairman of the nine-member jury, British film maker Lindsay Anderson was forced to remark: "The whole exercise seems too ambitious ... the organisers simply haven't the organisation to pull it off."

Bad Selection: With screening venues miles apart, festival delegates were rushing from the main auditorium at the Asiad Village in Siri Fort to the Indian Panorama in Mavalankar Hall and back to the retrospectives at the Medical Institute theatre—a round trip of about 30 km—each time anyone wanted to know what was going on. And what was going on? Films—especially the 80-odd in the Information Section—of such abysmally low quality, that even mild-mannered actor-director Amol Palekar admitted that festival standards had hit an all-time low. "This is absolutely a rock-bottom selection," he claimed, "after events like the Calcutta Filmotsav which opened with classics like *Blood Wedding* and had some of the best retrospectives to be seen anywhere in the world, the present Delhi festival pales into insignificance." Added Muriel Peters, film representative of the powerful Asia Society in New York that two years ago organised one of the best expositions of Indian cinema held abroad called 'FilmIndia': "I think the Delhi festival needs better organisation and coordination. It needs more pulling together."

True, the festival opened with a fairly powerful political film on racial discrimination in South Africa called *Amok* by Moroccan director Souhel Ben Barka, and the presentation of the British Film Institute's annual award to Adoor Gopalakrishnan's *Elipathayam* was a genuine honour. But gone were the days when stars like Gina Lollobrigida and Michael York used to spread the glitter; gone, in fact, was the apogee of the festival when, in 1977, some of the greatest living masters of the cinema had flocked to Delhi—Antonioni, Kurosawa, Elia Kazan and Satyajit Ray all present in the same city in the same week.



Gopalakrishnan receives the British Film Institute's award from Anderson: significant honour

Said Rumanian film journalist Adina Darian, a frequent visitor to the Delhi festival: "The Delhi festival used to have much more glamour. But in the end it's not the glamour that counts but the films. And I would say that the film selection here is certainly not representative of the best foreign countries have to offer."

In fact, arguably the best [illegible] Competition Section, made up [illegible] movies this year, was the Indian [illegible] *Chokh* (The Eye), a gripping, dra[illegible] of the intrigue-infested corridors of [illegible] cutta hospital made by a young [illegible] called Utpalendu Chakraborty. [illegible] tingly, some of the best films shown [illegible] festival were in the Panorama [illegible] showing the latest in serious Indian [illegible] ma. These included Jabbar Patel's [illegible] *tha* in Marathi, possibly the most [illegible] cing feminist film from India [illegible] Shyam Benegal's *Aarohan*, Sai Paranjpye's [illegible] *Katha*, and Shekhar Kapoor's [illegible]

Political Investigations: [illegible] ally, radical comment was very [illegible] evidence: the most sought after [illegible] best made—films were taking [illegible] ideological stances. Both Costa-Gavras's [illegible] *Missing* and the Turkish film [illegible] shared the Palm D'Or prize at Cannes [illegible] summer, are powerful political [illegible] tions. Zoltan Fabri's *Requiem* from [illegible] gary, and Humberto Solas' *Cecilia* [illegible] Cuba, were essentially political [illegible] the story of a socialist who dissents [illegible] the party line, and the other a fe[illegible] ment on the rule in Cuba.

But with a generally poor selection [illegible] films and poorer management, the [illegible] val's audience appeal, or for the [illegible] audience response, was so [illegible] most of the city seemed to [illegible] ware that there was a film [illegible] on. Although I & B Secretary [illegible] Lal defended its success, [illegible] cinemas running festival [illegible] registered 90 per cent sales [illegible] not the case. One south Delhi [illegible] ma-owner whose theatre was [illegible] with a Claude Sautet [illegible] claimed that he could fill [illegible] his hall. "No, no one is [illegible] cordons to get in this time [illegible] med. Perhaps one reason for [illegible] sales was the jacking up [illegible] prices—the highest from [illegible] year to Rs 25, with [illegible] passing around that there [illegible] anything particularly worth [illegible] see anyway.

The festival's late start [illegible] ning was wholly unjustified [illegible] year. Till 1982, when the [illegible] ran the show and drew [illegible] from the ministry, the delay [illegible] nerally attributed to a late [illegible] funds. This year, with the NFDC [illegible] the Rs 60 lakh spent came from [illegible] ration's budget and planning [illegible] should have begun as soon as [illegible] was over. But it wasn't till [illegible] months before the film festival [illegible] that any serious effort started.

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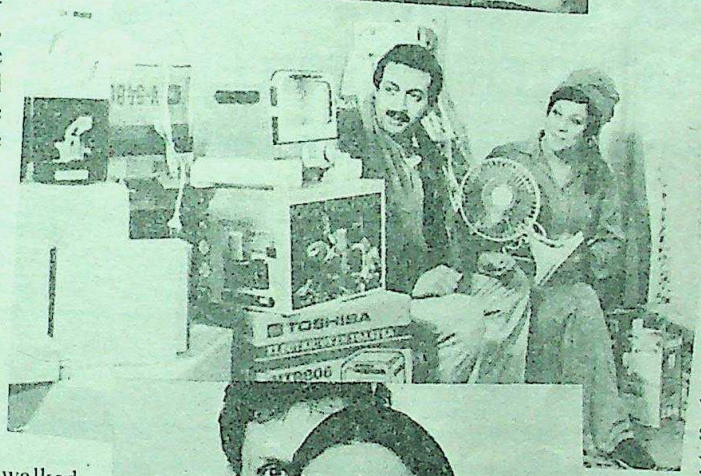
ND THE lack of effort showed everywhere. In the retrospectives devot- the works of the late Bra- director Glauber Rocha, director Claude Sautet Russian director Sergei Bon- ch, no one could explain as few as five films by each shown—certainly not enough constitute a retrospective. Nor anyone explain why Sri director James Lester was duplicated in the retro- when his retrospective had been shown in Delhi two ago. Worse still was the se- of short films in competition with as five of the 10 entries either ori- from, or concerning Indian the- case of biased selection or merely tion of the fact that there wasn't to select from?

considerably more serious than the wrangles of the Indian festival is ant external threat to its by the glamour of the bur- Manila Film Festival. last year by the autocratic regime, the Manila festival becoming the darling of the film scene, a position once by the Teheran Film under the equally auto- regime of the Shah. no doubt about it," film maker Sai Paranjpye, been completely upstaged part of the Manila Film Every well-known direc- film celebrity now goes and we've lost out comple-



Scenes from (starting top) ***Dulia, Britannia Hospital, The Bus Driver and From The Life Of Marionettes***

l Success: Manila has also walked rumours are to be believed, of the honour of showing Attenbo- widely successful epic *Gandhi*, Directorate desperately tried, and obtain it for inaugurating the tival. A disgruntled Directorate also quick to point out why has succeeded: "It's not necessarily they have a fatter budget or that directors' spawn special glamour but because their organisation works year round to get the festival to- Ours works about five months." point was driven home brutally when the NFDC announced that with the timing of the annual Delhi would be shifted from Janua- August. Obviously, the idea is not to directly with Manila which, star- the last week of January, takes off Delhi festival ends. But August, being a cruel month in Delhi for attracting foreigners, is not the only deterrent. As one foreign film journalist was quick to point out, August is also the month the Montreal and Venice film festivals—both established international events on the festival calendar—are held. "You'll have one hell of a time trying to get anyone to Delhi then," he said.

Even more ambitious are the NFDC's plans to organise a non-competitive festival—known as Filmotsav—every alternate year, apart from the annual film jamboree every August in Delhi. Which means that, in 1984, the year of Orwellian doom, India will be hosting two film festivals, a thought that is sending some of the serious-minded Directorate officials looking for rapid transfers back to their original jobs. "We can't manage one festival a year properly, how are we going to put together two?" asks one who has already put in his papers.

Fresh Thinking: Film makers like Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal, Paranjpye and Gopalakrishnan who happen to be directors of the NFDC board have been suggesting that perhaps India should seriously start thinking afresh on the film festival concept, and take on only as much as it can chew. Paranjpye, a keen and discerning member of the international film scene, thinks that the Delhi festival should be scrapped altogether. Says she: "Perhaps we should select a resort venue like Goa, away from the bureaucratic jungle of Delhi, and start establishing film facilities like screening theatres and so on. We'll be able to attract foreigners, delegates, and buyers and sellers, and compete with Cannes. And we'll slowly be able to institutionalise a decent film festival. At the rate we're going, we'll lose even the reputation we have so precariously built up over the years."

Meanwhile, the goings-on at the NFDC belie any such exuberant hopes. Two recently made top-level appointments in the Directorate—of joint director and deputy general manager—have gone to candidates with a scant background in cinema. At the NFDC meeting held last December, there was an uproar when the four film makers on the organisation's board protested strongly against the appointments, with Mrinal Sen and Shyam Benegal demanding the bio-data of the candidates selected for the jobs.

The bio-datas, of course, were not immediately forthcoming, because it seemed that everybody was too busy gearing up to get the film festival into some semblance of respectability. That too, has become an unfortunate eventuality with the decline of the Indian film festival now a complete fall.

—SUNIL SETHI

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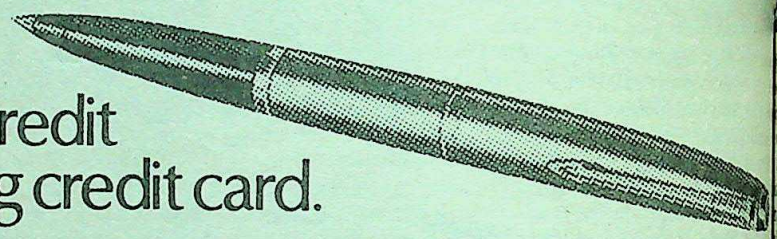

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Kiss And Tell

CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE! M CENSORSHIP: THE INSIDE

BY
BITA SARKAR
Book House (Bombay)
Rs 15; Pages: 125

FILM censorship is an easy target. Pot-shots at it are taken by most journalists in search of smart copy. Besides, it can be illustrated with scenes cut by the censors that help sales. No publisher ever turns down a book on censorship. There are few s in the cinema on which more non- is written, because there are few who have an inside knowledge of rkings of censorship.

w people are as competent to write nsorship as Kobita Sarkar. Apart ing a responsible film critic of long g she was, for the best part of 15 ember of Advisory Panels of the Board and finally of the Central self. What makes her book highly is that it recounts her personal ence of censoring a wide variety of many languages. One gets a vivid ften amusing picture of the interplay en the members nominated to the ry panels and the officials who con- ther business. It did not take the long to find out that in the Censor as elsewhere, morality means morality. In a certain foreign film, ers kissed twice, the second time ly but more ardently. Two mem- sted that the second kiss should t's wrong with it," asked a third. o much!" "Why," I asked, truly d. "One kiss is enough," said the ber flatly. "It's vulgar. The girl is g herself!" said the second dissen- n the strength of this incredible the scene was snipped under Rule 34 guidelines.

verse Values: One would have ght that the film industry would chafe much restraint. It does not, says a Sarkar. When the Khosla Commit- ggested, among many other things, where it is germane to the story and n good taste, the kiss per se should n. Nudity is suggested in their films wi- that lips meeting that would be robbed of its secret force by the openness of the kiss. There was an outcry even from some of the actresses. The industry seemed to prefer the convention under which "various parts of the anatomy can be pecked at with impunity, specially if the couple are married or one of them is going to die shortly. But the lips are taboo. Rape is, of course, quite palatable. Similarly, female gods from mythologicals can be dressed provocatively and producers sound indignant that anyone should even suggest that there was anything vaguely reprehensible about it. All sorts of sexual cavorting was justified if it was cloaked in a mythological garb".

And yet, Kobita Sarkar suggests, were the kiss to be allowed, it would do away with the need to chase around any available object. It would make half the songs and dialogues redundant, and films would become much shorter and more logical. At a meeting with John Trevelyan, former secretary of the British Board of Film Censors, Kobita found the British censor far more concerned about violence, especially violence for its own sake. He also treated better quality films with greater consideration. The discrimination that went into his censorship was remarkable. He claimed that Roman Polanski always made violence repulsive, while many made it attractive.

Some interesting observations in the book are on male chauvinistic attitudes behind censorship and conventions in cinema itself. When a man is unfaithful, the censor does not bat an eyelid, but a woman must die or be punished for it. And men do their own censoring when they say: "I wouldn't like my sister to see such things," thus assuming that brother, uncle or male cousin can be exposed to pornography for they are strong enough not to be corrupted by such goings-on, while a sister would not be able to cope with it.

In the discussion of politics, Kobita Sarkar is on less firm ground. She dismisses political films such as those of Mrinal Sen as little more than allegories but does not go into celebrated case histories such as of *Kissa Kursi Ka* or *An Indian Story*. Perhaps she has not herself participated in political censorship and therefore feels justified in not discussing it in an ostensibly personal account. Yet, in so far as it is also an account of censorship in India, this is a considerable gap in an otherwise absorbing book. And her discussion of the nuts and bolts of censorship, including its code, its structure and its functioning will be of great use to those who attach importance to fact

—CHIDANANDA DASGUPTA

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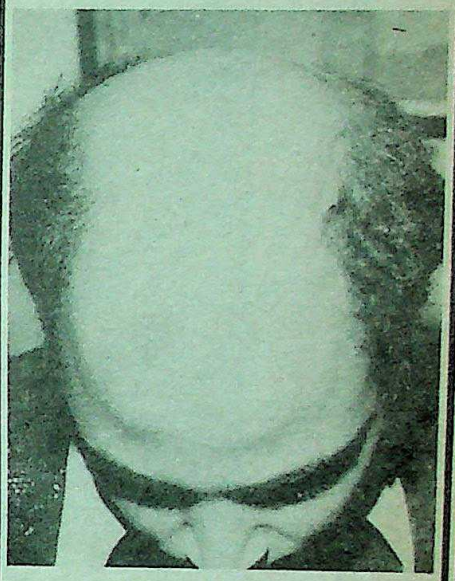

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1. The shares of KOTHARI (Madras) LIMITED are officially quoted and regularly traded in Madras, Bombay, Delhi, Bangalore, Calcutta and Ahmedabad Stock Exchanges for greater negotiability and better service to the Shareholders.

2. Apart from the Annual General Meeting held in Madras, the Company also arranges Meetings of the Shareholders at different centres in the country viz. Bombay, Bangalore, New Delhi, Calcutta and Coimbatore.

THESE ARE THE SALIENT POINTS OF THE STATEMENT MADE BY MR. D. C. KOTHARI, CHAIRMAN, KOTHARI (Madras) LIMITED, AT THE 13TH ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING OF THE COMPANY.

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NOTE: This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the 13th Annual General Meeting held on 30th December 1982 at Madras.

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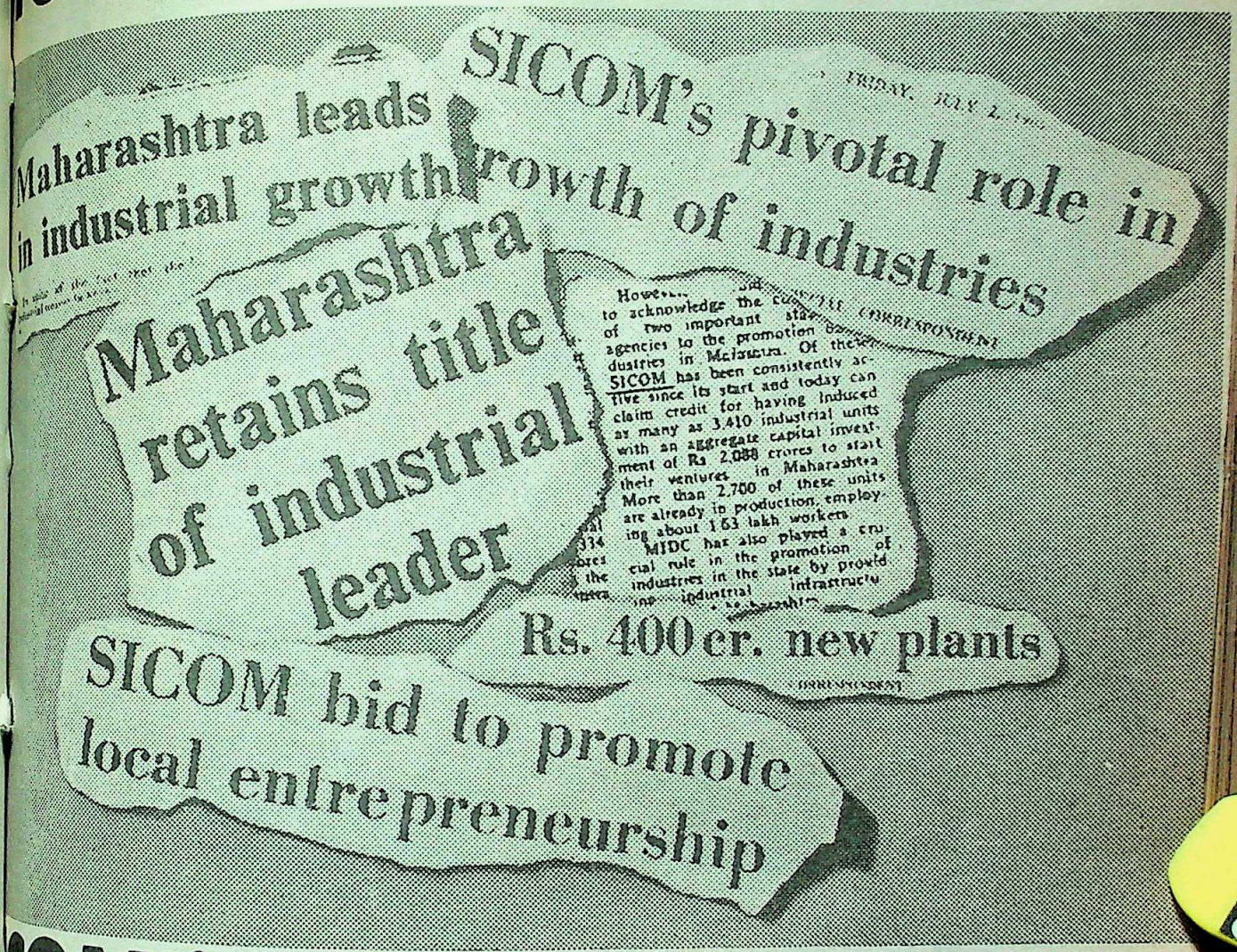

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anic Chemicals and Reliance Textile
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Maharashtra's Industrial Catalyst

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CASSIC-199

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Issar and Bachchan on the sets of *Coolie*: fighting fit

■ It was a hyped-up exercise in self-indulgence. Stepping out from his Volkswagen bus onto the brilliant red carpet which ran into the sets at Bombay's Chandivili studios, last fortnight, superstar **Amitabh Bachchan** certainly appeared every inch to be the man of the moment. Raucous shouts of "Amitabh Bachchan zindabad" rent the air, as Bachchan, dressed in a railway porter's uniform, which he had worn when he suffered from the accident last July, resulting in a close shave with death, stepped onto the sets of **Manmohan Desai**'s *Coolie*. And just when the superstar put his best foot forward, a naval brass band broke into a loud rendition of *Tere Jaise Yaar Kahan* followed by a dramatic reunion between Bachchan and **Puneet Issar**, whose blow reportedly caused the accident. It was showmanship at its worst. In the harsh glare of pressmen's flashbulbs and studio arc lamps, every movement of the superstar was recorded for posterity, and perhaps if he enters politics, for the voting public. And to add a touch of drama to the whole scene, Bachchan started shooting from exactly where he had left off—the only difference was that this time Bachchan beat the stuffing out of Issar—a scene obviously destined to delight his fans, and the movie's financial backers.

BHAWAN SINGH

Anjali with her husband Christian: documentary tribute

■ There are few grandmothers in the world who have earned as much respect and possibly as much fame as has **Durga Khote**, the 76-year-old charmer, whose beautiful granddaughter **Anjali Sale** is exhibiting her tribute to her famous star grandmother, at the Film Festival in New Delhi. Anjali together with her French husband **Christian Sale** made a short film for the French television, extensively shot in Bombay, which has a look at Hindi cinema during the last 50 years. Titled *The Indian Mirror*, it covers the most memorable performances and instances from the kaleidoscopic world of Hindi films through the eyes of Durga Khote, a kind of docudrama making use of the cinema verite style. Khote has been assisted in this venture by veteran film maker **V. Shantaram**, actor-producer **Shashi Kapoor** and of course Anjali herself. Said a beaming Anjali: "As long as people come out of the movie saying she (Durga Khote) is a great lady, I am happy."

■ Often fame and familiarity come to people after they've gone from this world. Last fortnight, while Indian film... were all a flurry, chew... nails and nerves for... kind of recognition... International Film Fes... New Delhi, there were tw... makers who were creat... ves over the ocean... thumously. The two in... tion: **Ritwick Ghatak**, w... in Calcutta, six years ago... age of 50 and **Guru Dutt**, ... films *Pyaasa* and *Sahib B... Ghulam* made him the ... the '50s, but who at the ... of his career committed ... But both their works ... Last fortnight, London ... ing treated to a festi... Ghatak films and if rave ... are anything to go by, th... doing well.

Across the channel ... Dutt's films were bring... unprecedented crowds. B... ceived rave reviews. Acc... to film critic Iqbal Masoo... crowds who came to see ... films inevitably ended u... bing through them.

Ghatak (left) and Dutt in a still from his film: posthumous acclaim

SIGN POSTS

■ **Awarded:** The ... Sahitya Akademi awar... well-known Hindi satir... Shankar Parsai, Indo-E... novelist Arun Josh... Malayalam short story ... V.K. Narayanan Kutt... three are among the 22 ... who have won the awar...

■ **Awarded:** Shombhu ... the distinguished director ... and playwright of West B... the Kalidasa Samman, ... tional award institute ... Madhya Pradesh to hono... cellence in the creative ...

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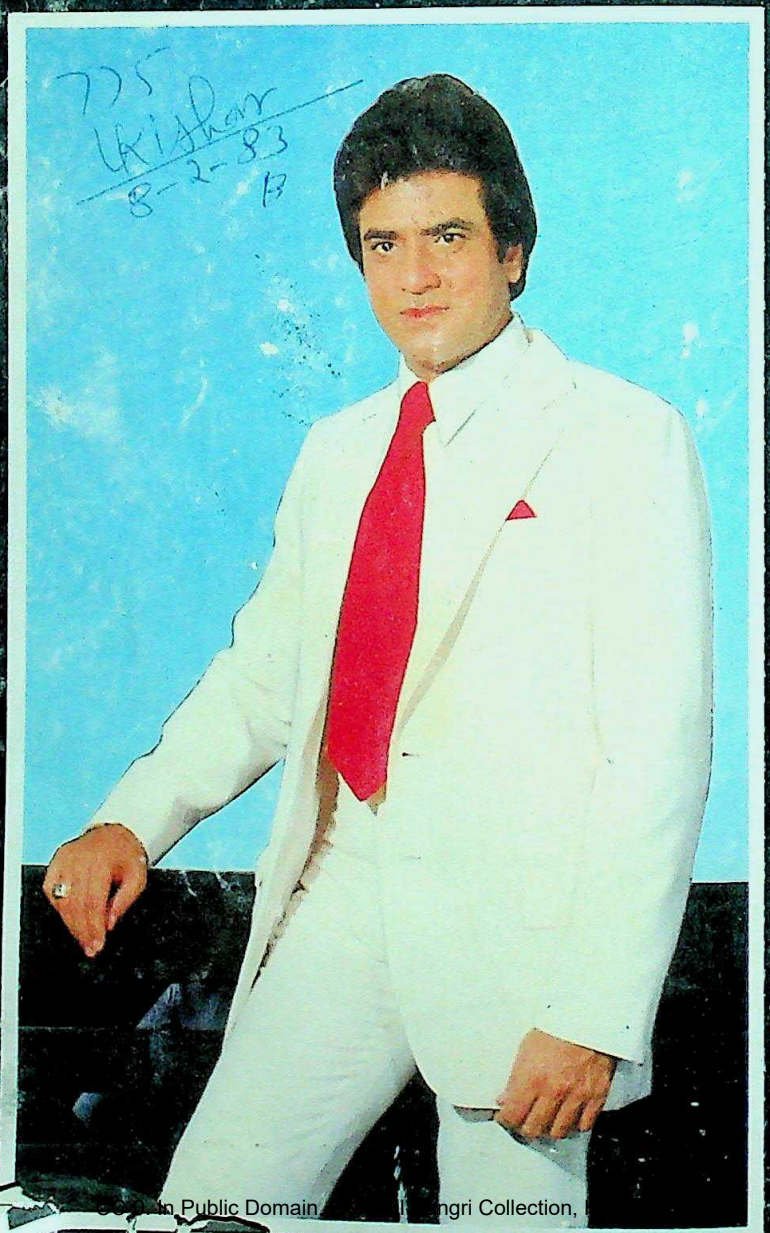

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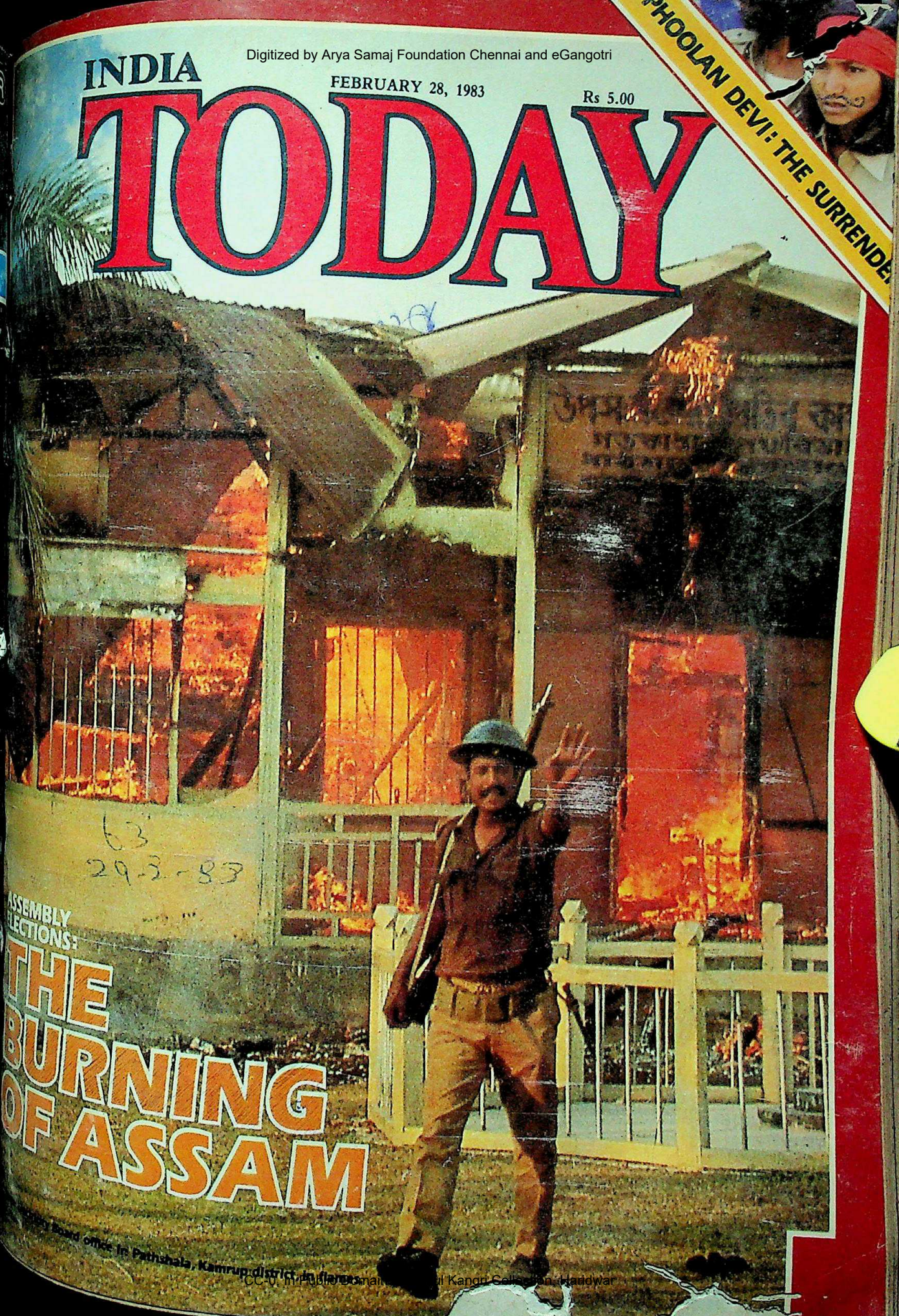

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS:

THE BURNING OF ASSAM

Polling booth office in Pathshala, Kamrup district, Indian Express

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THE FORTNIGHT FEBRUARY 16–28, 1983

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FEBRUARY 28, 1983

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DEMOCRACY sometimes teaches strange lessons, and the strangest of them all is currently being acted out in the remote North-eastern state of Assam. Since January 6, when the ruling party announced its ill-fated decision to go through with elections in the state, the once-placid Brahmaputra valley has been transformed into a bloody battlefield.

Till last week, the death toll in the pre-poll violence stood at exactly 60, a heavy price to pay for what can eventually only be a facade of legitimacy. Tragically, the final toll cannot but be higher as the violence, and emotions, escalate. In fact, the visual impact of the pre-poll scenario bears little resemblance to an orderly, democratic election, as Correspondent CHAITANYA KALBAG, *who spent 10 days touring the riot-torn valley, discovered.*

Travelling almost 1,000 km through the state's worst-hit districts, Kalbag and Photographer BHAWAN SINGH *encountered constant signs of the election's violent undercurrents. For two days, they were unable to hire a vehicle to travel outside Gauhati because cars were being forcibly requisitioned by the Government for election duty. Travel after dark was fraught with danger because all moving vehicles were stoned first and questioned later. The most ironical was Kalbag's journey back to Delhi. He returned on a deserted Indian Airlines Airbus which had been chartered by the Centre to ferry another reluctant planeload of government employees and Indian Administrative Service probationers to the distant state for election duty.*

Emotion has never run higher than it does now and it has succeeded in clouding logic. Says Kalbag: "There are no moderate opinions left. Everybody has something angry and emotional to say. Whether they are for or against the elections, everybody speaks in extremes." But the most disheartening sight for Kalbag, who has visited the region frequently on previous assignments, was the sight of the beautiful Brahmaputra valley, pockmarked for the first time with bomb blasts and bullet holes, bristling with the guns of the paramilitary forces. Singh shot the cover picture while on a tour of Kamrup district. Driving on a highway near Pathshala, he caught sight of flames from a distance and stopped the car. Running through adjoining fields, Singh was able to shoot just two frames before the police—one of whom is seen in the cover picture signalling Singh not to take pictures—stopped him. The burning building turned out to be the local State Electricity Board office set aflame on the afternoon of February 10 by people whose identities are unlikely ever to be established.

WITH ASSAM threatening to blow up, a drama of another kind was being enacted in another part of the country. Climaxing two years of blood-chilling crime, Phoolan Devi announced her decision to surrender to the Madhya Pradesh authorities at Bhind. To cover the event, Correspondent SUNIL SETHI *and Photographer* PRAMOD PUSHKARNA *drove to Bhind through the night. From his post at Bhopal,* SREEKANT KHANDEKAR *made tracks for the surrender location while correspondent* ANAND SAGAR *filed from Lucknow, giving details of the dacoit's career in crime in Uttar Pradesh where she carried out most of her operations. Pushkarna's colour pictures are the first of their kind to see print.*

पुस्तकालय गुरुकुल कांगड़ी
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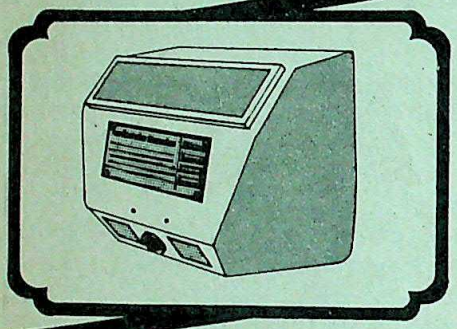

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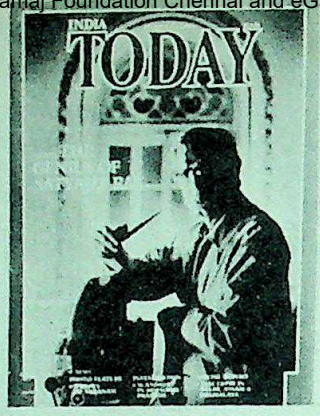

RAVES FOR RAY

"The Genius Of Satyajit Ray" (February 15) was a fitting tribute to the doyen of Indian films. Ray with his brilliant cinematic skills has single-handedly put India on the international level.

Madras *Padma Raghavan*

■ I was interested to read in the interview that the recent science fiction films have been moulded by Ray's *The Alien*. This was more so because I have seen a drawing by Ray of the imagined alien and it greatly resembled the ones emerging from the spaceship in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Nagpur *Arindam Ghosh.*

POST-MORTEM

The cover story "The Crash Of '83" (January 31) should serve as an eye-opener for the leaders of the ruling party. The article shows where exactly the Congress(I) went wrong and how the Opposition managed to capitalise on their errors. Reading the article it became evident that the Congress(I) has a long and hard road to travel to win back the confidence of the people.

Arrah *Param Hans Singh*

■ What political pundits of the national media have been trying to feed us is that the rejection of the Congress(I) is because of the performance of the local leaders, not Mrs Gandhi. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Mrs Gandhi's first error was to encourage dissident activity against M. Channa Reddy. The second was when Rajiv Gandhi reprimanded the Andhra Pradesh chief minister publicly. The third came when Mrs Gandhi brought in a political nonentity like B. Venkatram as the chief minister and replaced him with K. Vijayabhaskara Reddy who was just a rubber stamp. Lastly, she indulged in empty rhetoric instead of addressing herself to the problems of the state. Therefore let us not beat about the bush—the voter rejected Mrs Gandhi and nothing can hide that fact.

Secunderabad *G.S. Khurana*

■ The Assembly elections ha[illegible] that Indian politics is not confined [illegible] bad alone. There is also Hydera[illegible]

Hyderabad

■ The Andhra Pradesh Assembl[illegible] proves that the days of winning by [illegible] lavishly are over. What the electora[illegible] by now is performance, as has be[illegible] demonstrated.

Hyderabad *Raje[illegible]*

■ It was really like the crash of [illegible] craft—brought down by one brave [illegible]

Sindri *Md. Aufe[illegible]*

■ It is a pity that today a film a[illegible] N.T. Rama Rao enjoys more o[illegible] than an experienced and respected [illegible] Mrs Gandhi.

Calcutta *Sou[illegible]*

■ By focussing more attention o[illegible] Rama Rao than on Ramakrishna [illegible] INDIA TODAY has fallen into the trap [illegible] jecting yet another populist succes[illegible] The choice of the people of Kar[illegible] more significant because it was based [illegible] reason not on emotion.

Shimoga *H.N. D[illegible]*

■ Rama Rao has promised us a co[illegible] efficient government and I think we [illegible] one. Let the Congress(I) work its w[illegible] from the Opposition benches.

Secunderabad *B. Ratnam[illegible]*

■ To Mrs Gandhi's remark that [illegible] not the job of an actor we can well s[illegible] is not that of a pilot either.

Gauhati *Mous[illegible]*

■ The defeat in the south is a blow [illegible] Gandhi but it still cannot diminish h[illegible] re as a dynamic and able leader.

Kota *Kasturi S[illegible]*

■ Now that the hope of India [illegible] proved to be a hoax, Indian Airline[illegible] take the ex-pilot back on compa[illegible] grounds.

Paramakudi *G. Pard[illegible]*

■ It has now become clear that [illegible] time a government will work is [illegible] time for elections.

New Delhi

■ The important thing about R[illegible] is not that he, a film star, has made [illegible] minister but that a man without any [illegible] background has been able to su[illegible] challenge Mrs Gandhi. *U. Mah[illegible]*

Olavakkot

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Jai Singh Bika
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TOLL

e "Letter From The Editor" (Jan-
just seemed to be a lengthy apology
inaccurate poll. Surveys and polls, I
n only be carried out in the West
e voter is educated and the pollster is
by sophisticated equipment.

Buddha Deb Chattopadhyay

ink the concept of a swingometer is
ly wrong in this context. The
meter, or more precisely the pen-
ings from left to right about its
axis and any future position can be
with the known parameters of
eight and harmonic motion period.
hardly be said for shifts in opinion.

S.L. Joshi

appreciate INDIA TODAY's guts in
ing the election forecast. But more
I liked the charming way in which
racy was explained away. But the
ercise proves that this magazine
lack in one thing—spirit.

Sudha Srinivasan

DOINGS

"Trail Of Darkness" (January 31) is a
of what charlatans do in practically
dian village. When will the Govern-
laws to deal with these unscrupu-
ucks?

Dr Atul Kumar

Y STATE

Tamil Nadu is reeling under an unpre-
and power shortage and drought. Soon
will no rice and Madras will not have
drinking water ("State Of Idleness",
y 31). All the Government does is

trumpet the successes of the Midday Meal Scheme. I think the entire Cabinet should resign for bringing the state to this sorry pass.

Madras *J. Geetha*

TWO-WHEELER SUCCESS

I was very pleased to read in "The Two Stroke Revolution" (January 31) how the two-wheeler industry is prospering. Though each manufacturing firm has some foreign collaboration it is still a remarkable achievement on their part.

Bangalore *M. Pafiullah*

■ The whole article seems to be tilted in favour of Bajaj Auto Ltd in an effort to boost their sagging image. How can the author predict that this company will emerge the strongest in 1990?

Bhopal *K.R. Yogesh*

■ I think the article was slightly unfair to Kinetic Engineering Ltd. It is true that the Hero Majestic moped has done well but Kinetic is still the largest producer with about 11 per cent higher production than Hero. The only reason that Kinetic has not crossed the 1 lakh mark is the prolonged strike by workers.

Pune *R. Mani*

DISAPPOINTING SLIP

In "Cracks In The Edifice" (January 31) it is stated that Chief Minister S.C. Mathur sacked Bhanwar Lal Bhadada, former MLA and chairman of the Bhilwara Urban Improvement Trust. As a matter of fact it was Kailash Vyas who was sacked from the post and Bhadada was appointed.

Bhilwara *Dr S.P. Mathur*

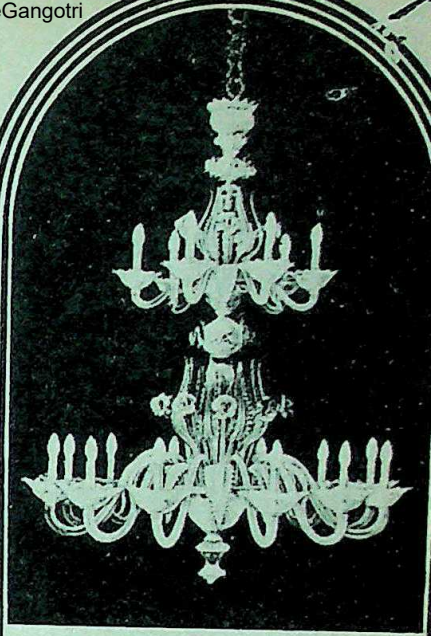
CAMPUS CRISIS

Whatever the merits and demerits of the case, the teachers are definitely not justified in going on an indefinite strike ("Campus Crunch", January 31). The teachers are just ruining the careers of the students who they are supposed to be educating. This has become evident now that about 1,00,000 students will lose one academic year because of the strike.

Delhi *Rajeev Chandra Seth*

■ It is a pity that the article only made mention of those students who were against the strike. The key issues of the strike are, in a larger perspective, of equal concern to students. Because of the low incentives and lack of motivation the profession has of late attracted only mediocre talent. And mediocrity in the ranks of the teachers breeds mediocrity in students. It is in our mutual interest that conditions for teachers improve.

New Delhi *Jyoti M. Banerjee*



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BIDDING FAREWELL

The interview with Khushwant Singh ("I Haven't Compromised", January 31) was marked with the frankness which one associates with the man. *The Hindustan Times* will not be the same without him.

Tiruchy *R. Kanakaraj*

■ What a fitting finale to a man whose motto is malice towards one and all!

Patna *Sanjay Jain*

■ Singh says that a newspaper should play the part of the Opposition. But all through his journalistic career he has done the opposite of what he now preaches.

Agra *S.C. Mathur*

FIGHTING CHAUVINISM

The report "Feminine Fury" (January 31) was commendable for its information and unbiased attitude. It will go a long way in drawing the attention of people about how women are treated in this country. And I for one would like to know how the Saheli case ends.

Calcutta *Ananya Biswas*

INDIAN TRINITY

In the review of the film *Partner* ("Formula For Fun", January 31) it is mentioned that the makers have used the formula of Hindi films to their advantage. What it fails to mention is that it is a straight copy of the *Trinity* series which was popular a few years ago.

Simla *Nikhil Mohan*

A WINTER'S TALE

The photo feature "In The Cold Of The Night" (January 31) was marvellous. Each photograph captured the essence of Delhi's winter.

New Delhi *Vatsala Khanna*

■ The photographs underlined our callousness and hypocrisy. More than 400 deaths were reported in the country and yet the Government made no move to circumstances or to compensate the of the victims. Yet if there had been slightest political advantage attached politicians would have descended poor unfortunates in droves.

Bombay *Abdul Rab*

HARD-EARNED DEMOCRACY

While sympathising with Nusrat it is hard to believe that her husband red" Indians ("Pakistan May Break January 15). It was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto called Indians dogs after a meeting UN. And maybe one day Mrs Bhutto realise that Indians are not "lucky" their democracy—they have worked

Texas, USA *A.G.*

WELCOME HUMOUR

"Indianotes" are always a source laughter for us and the cartoons are So far not even one item has bored

Shorapur *Tirumal M*

BRANDT COMMISSION

As a member of the Brandt Commission, I cannot help writing to point out that the article "Grass Roots Solutions" (January 15) is full of inaccuracies in its references to the Brandt Commission. Firstly, about the composition of the commission it is said that it did not include a single industrialist unless Katherine Graham can be called one. Mr Peterson who heads a major multinational in the US and Mrs Khatij Ahmed who controls and runs a large business outfit from Malaysia were also members of the commission. Another member, Mr Morris of Canada has been a trade unionist all his life. Mr Pisani from France had an agricultural background. It is scarcely correct to say that the commission's members were almost entirely politicians or bureaucrats.

Nowhere in the report of the Brandt Commission is there, to my knowledge, a single paragraph suggesting that "the poor countries are poor because the rich ones have exploited them", nor does it anywhere assert, even by implication, that "government policy will always be able to improve on markets and that international institutions rather than enterprise—free or private—are the key to development". It is stated that the global system envisaged by the Brandt Commission will mean that major decisions will be taken not in New Delhi but in World Bank headquarters.

Now, firstly, the Brandt report has not put forward any outline of a global system. It has urged the North and the South to agree upon the issues which divide them because—and this is its main thrust—it is in their mutual interest to cooperate rather than remain locked in postures of confrontation. It has drawn attention to the importance of raising food production in poorer countries, dealing with the energy problem and removal of protective barriers to trade. It has urged that there is need in the present financial state of the world to strengthen the resources of developing countries which will generate more employment in developed countries.

Among the sources of finance it refers not only to the World Bank and the governments but also to the capital markets of the world and the multinational corporations. Your assertion that the Brandt Commission points in the direction of decisions being taken not in Delhi but in World Bank headquarters makes me wonder whether in fact the author read the report.

New Delhi *L.K. Jha*

Jay Dubashi writes: *Nowhere in my article have I said that the lines Mr Jha gives in quotes are from the Brandt Commission report. But Mr Jha will not deny that the central proposition of the report is the necessity for a massive transfer of resources from rich countries to poor ones and that such transfers would promote economic growth and alleviate poverty in the South. This proposition obviously implies that reverse massive transfer of resources (from poor countries to rich ones) that has taken place in the past or is taking place, is responsible for the pre state of mass poverty among the countries. The blurb clearly says that North has not been willing in the past accept the South's case that the economy works to the South's disadvantage." Since the world is dominated the North, the implication is clear: it North that is responsible for the lack development that is poverty in the S*

I cannot see how Mr Jha can that the report has not put forward any line of a global system. The report is ing if not global in its scope and recommendations. It is actually a political not just an economic blueprint, and it with world problems politically. It recommends an "international energy strategy a "global food programme" and an tive international monetary and fin system".

And as if the existing international bodies were not enough (it lists 20), it for the creation of at least three super-international organisations "International Trade Organisation" supervise Gatt and Unctad) a Development Fund" (which would be bigger than the World Bank and the and a "high-level advisory body" for toring the "performance of the multilateral organisations in the international development". If this is global approach, I do not know wh

About the composition of the mission, Mr Jha is quite right. There indeed two members with business grounds—two out of 20.

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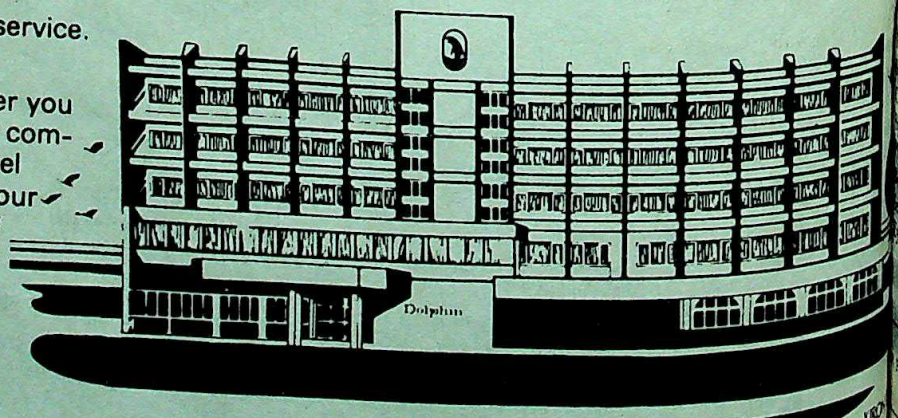

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EVENTS

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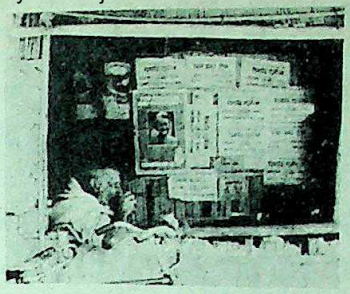

COVER STORY: Till last week, the death toll stood at over 50 and before the bizarre exercise was through, it would evidently be much higher. And yet, Mrs Gandhi's defiant tour of Assam emphasised that the ruling party was determined to go through with elections in that riot-torn state. With the agitationists determined to escalate their violent opposition, it promises to be the most controversial election in Indian history. **Page: 16**

CURRENT EVENTS: Despite its morale-boosting win in the Delhi elections, the ruling party has a long way to go before its house is set in order. The minor reshuffle of her Cabinet by Mrs Gandhi turned out to be anti-climactic and pressures in the Congress(I) ruled states continue to mount. **Page: 22**

SPECIAL FEATURE: Swami Dhirendra Brahmachari is not one to let any grass grow under his feet. Last fortnight, he was finalising plans for what will be his most ambitious project yet—a yoga-centre-cum amusement park-cum-wildlife preserve in neighbouring Haryana, that, in his words, will rival Disneyland. An exclusive report. **Page: 62**

ENVIRONMENT: Though not yet made public, the recent decision by the Indian Space Research Organisation to take over a part of the Mahendragiri hills in Karnataka as a testing site is in total disregard of the damage it will do to the environment, the surrounding area and the wildlife in the region. **Page: 90**

BUREAUCRACY: Of Mrs Gandhi's image-building exercises just before the Delhi elections, the one that has caused the most controversy is her directive regarding the bureaucracy, affecting as it does key personnel in key ministries including the Prime Minister's Secretariat. An analysis of what the changes will mean. **Page: 79**

SPORTS: With the bad taste of India's dismal defeat by Pakistan still in evidence, the appointment of Kapil Dev as the new Indian captain and the prospects of the refurbished team's chances against the West Indies are a major talking point. In his final report on the Pakistan series, Bishen Singh Bedi evaluates the new side and its prospects in the coming tour. **Page: 143**

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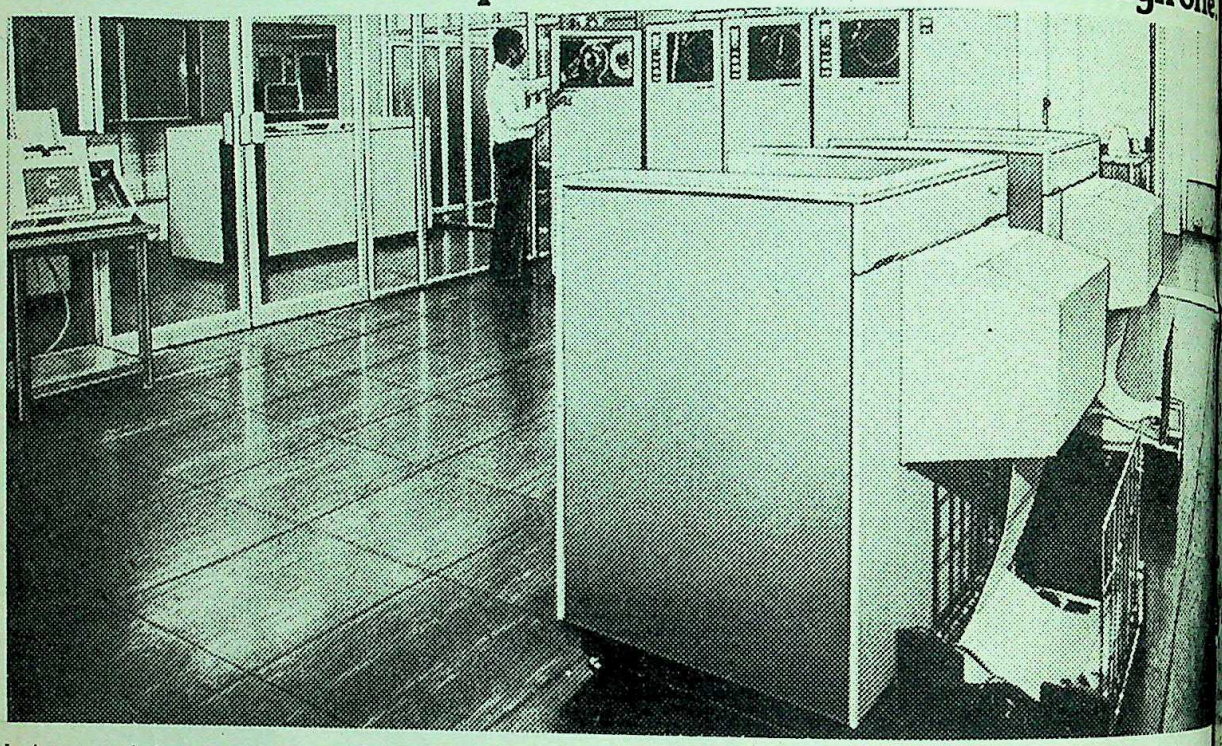

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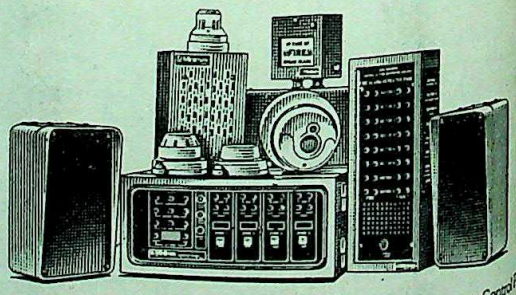

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The Indira Congress is no Congress . . . . It has become a dwindling house. I ...where I am.

—*Jagjivan Ram addressing newsmen in New Delhi*

The present leadership has perfected the malevolent art of exploiting fear by first ...ing it.

—*Jaswant Singh in* Mainstream

There are stirrings in Mrs Gandhi's 'Animal Farm . Some of the most loyal 'dogs ...stopped wagging their tails and started wagging their tongues.

—*V.P. Bhatia in* Organiser

A leader is elected by the people. Whatever he gets, by way of power or money, is ...se of the people. He cannot distribute or give it away as though it is his grand-...'s or father's property.

—*N.T. Rama Rao at a press conference in New Delhi*

The bulb in which I have been snugly ensconced for the last many years should ...e to flicker till life itself flickers out of my frame.

—*Khushwant Singh in* The Hindustan Times

Any average actor could have done that (Gandhi's) role. Such performance is ex-...d and there is nothing exceptional in this case.

—*Amitabh Bachchan on Ben Kingsley's role in* Gandhi *in* The Week

I think *Octopussy* is going ...for me what *Lawrence of* ...did for Omar Sharif in ...

—*Kabir Bedi in* Bombay

They made quite an item of ...news of Gandhi's death). ...must have been an impor-...old geezer. I wonder who ...?

An English train ticket col-...on the day of Gandhi's ...quoted by James Cameron in Express magazine

The first thing about the new look (in the Cabinet) is that it is in actual fact going ...the old look.

—*Editorial comment in* The Telegraph

...ot to take measures to counter what the Pakistani bomb is bound to do to this ...try's security, strategic interests, economy, politics and psychology will not be a ...ity but something a lot worse: suicide.

—*Inder Malhotra in* The Times of India

It's unreasonable to expect the Congress(I) to hold mid-term polls, because if they ...ey know they will not come back.

—*Maneka Gandhi in* Probe

We hate the very name Hindu, which is of Persian origin and hence a foreign ...Since the RSS stands for a Hindu *rashtra* . . . . we have been fighting it and want ...its growth in Tamil Nadu.

—DMK *leader Veeramani in* Onlooker

Politicians, in these days of television and magazines need them (journalists) to ...their image; diplomats need them to leak sensitive information to; lawyers ...them as clients (. . . lawyers in the US) regard journalists as their prime clientele, ...ahead of murderers and just behind divorcees.

—*Minhaz Merchant in* Gentlemen

They wanted to eliminate me even though I had a majority. At the same time they ...want to show that they are imposing a leader. So they made a facade of the ...

—*A.R. Antulay* in Bombay

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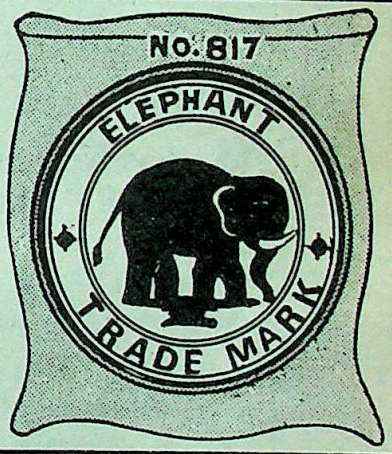

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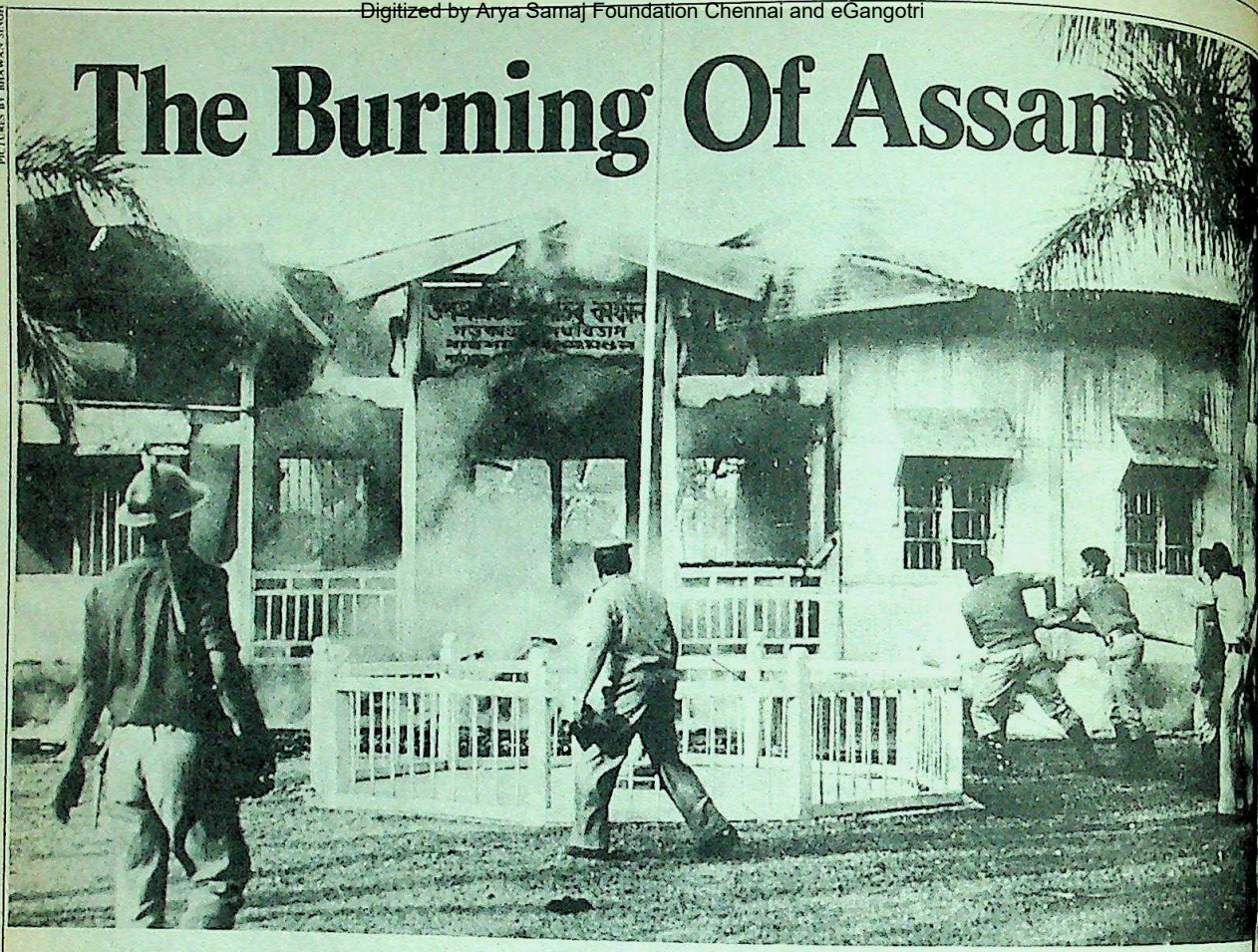
The Burning Of Assam



The fuse has been burning for almost four years and the mood in the state has passed through all the faces of anger, despair and belligerence to arrive, on election e at the explosive.

GAUHATI has become unrecognisable. Once the citadel of *lahe lahe*, the Assamese philosophy of languor and peaceability, the capital now rumbles with a subterranean rage. There is no election in sight—no posters, except at the odd street corner, watched over by a khaki brood of riot-clad paramilitary soldiers, no jeeps careening around the lanes with blaring loudspeakers, no soap-box oratory in the maze of byways. Fifteen kilometres down the Gauhati-Shillong road, behind miles of barbed wire and a cordon sanitaire of machine-gun-toting Border Security Force (BSF) personnel, the Secretariat and the MLA's Hostel plays uneasy host to the few bureaucrats who have violated the orders for a non-cooperation movement until election end, and to the scared huddle of Congress(I) candidates who are supposed to be out haranguing voters.

Such fear is not surprising, for the Assam elections are being held in unbelievably violent circumstances. The fuse has been burning for almost four years, and the mood in the state has passed through all the faces of anger, despair and belligerence to arrive, on election eve, at the explosive. As campaigning drew to a close on February 12 and Mrs Gandhi's Air Force Mi-8 helicopter touched down in the playground of Netaji Vidyapeeth at Maligaon, on the outskirts of Gauhati, it was clear that the prime minister was holding a bomb that threatened to explode in her hands. In what must have been her most cautious, security-encircled campaign ever, Mrs Gandhi took a hard line towards the agitators, saying that her government was determined to protect the minorities in Assam, and that they could not be dispersed from areas where they had been living for years.

But the fact remained that apart from the Congress(I), only the Left parties and the Congress(S) were contesting the el the other major national parties, the tiya Janata Party (BJP), the Janata Pa the two Lok Dals had boycotted the protest against their illegality. Th frontation deteriorated into civil bedience and virtual civil war.

Decimated Electorate: Never be independent India's history has the of an electorate's franchise been less more unjust. Although 86.7 lakh vo expected to go to the polls on Febru 17 and 20, the actual turn-out may more than a fifth of that figure. The will almost certainly be normal in t district, whose dominant Bengali pop has consistently opposed the agitati supported the Government's stand o grants. Cachar accounts for 15 seats 126-seat Assembly, and at least 61 m to be filled from the districts of Go Kamrup, Nowgong and Karbi A which have very large concentra

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Y, FEBRUARY

t Bengali Muslims and Hindus. mbers of 'minority' voters, how- expected to abstain from voting of fear of reprisals.

ra Gandhi is trying to impose her d of politics on Assam, but the state r mobs of violent anti-election agi- tension and fear crackle at Baihatta, m Gauhati on the road to Mangal- n knots of townspeople stand their faces hostile as the sparse s past. Every time a pebble rattles speeding car's mudguard, it sounds first throw in a fusillade.

ar town, a little further down the tally deserted. This area had spaw- st frenzied violence on February 2, w has been in force for four days ped on the town's outskirts is a e of trucks, guarded by Central Re- e Force (CRPF) men. Three buses n across the highway, their burnt- s framed by toppled trees that form ckade. A small wooden bridge burnt at both ends, patched together h rough planking. "The mobs are says the BSF platoon commander , fingering the safety-catch of his rifle. "Last night we had to hold people screaming at us to quit the

h Violence: Mangaldoi town is the nal headquarters in this cruelly rt of Darrang district. Outside the tion stand more than 500 riot-clad the BSF and the CRPF. The previous t people had been killed in police Tangla, 45 km ahead of Mangaldoi, furious mob attacked the police there. A BSF contingent had to force- into Tangla to impose an indefinite because all the bridges leading to the had been burnt.

bdivisional Officer Jitesh Khosla and ndent of Police N. Ramachandran perately trying to muster enough s so they can repair the approaches . "There are 460 wooden bridges in division," says Khosla. "How can we very one of them? The mobs have own sub-deputy commissioners' Tezpur and Mangaldoi, all land re- destroyed. How can the agitation- to throw out the foreigners if all evi- destroyed?" Adds Ramachandran "Not one Assamese from this willing to help us restore communi- to Tangla. We've had to recruit immigrant labourers from Dal- Dalgaon, 25 km away, happens to be constituency of Anwara Taimur, who minority Congress(I) ministry 1981. An Assamese inspector of ches up to tell Ramachandran that ners, stuffed into three requisi-

An agitator's bereaved widow and her children: victims of senseless violence

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Muslim maulvis and Hindu priests, recite memorial service for 'martyrs'. A tier memorial plaque topped by the distinctive AASU flag is showered with flowers b mourners.

tioned buses, refuse to move unless they are fed and paid. "They haven't eaten a morsel since yesterday," he says, "and if they refuse to cooperate you can forget Tangla."

Khosla and Ramachandran figured prominently in the trouble that broke out on February 2. The villagers near Sipajhar insist that the two entered Dakhin Chuburi village and arrested and beat up suspected agitationists. The two men were surrounded by a mob wielding axes and *daos*; Khosla ordered firing, and five men were injured. A little away, another mob attacked four Assam policemen guarding the Saktola bridge. Circle Inspector Ghanakanta Handique fired two sten gun rounds and two rounds of revolver fire. When his ammunition ran out, he ran to take refuge in a car parked close by. The car was dragged down a grassy verge, smashed with bamboo poles, and Handique was set upon, his eyes gouged out, his right leg broken in a dozen places, and then his body doused with petrol and set on fire. Handique killed three men before he died.

He was not the only policeman to die in mob violence; at least half a dozen others were killed in the frenzied fortnight before the elections. Handique's death was all the more poignant because he was an Assamese himself, and the mob's fury had increased because of that. At the Burha outpost, 18 km from Mangaldoi, four Assam police constables held a mob of 500 at bay for two hours on February 2, before they were relieved by a CRPF platoon. Only one agitator, Kulen Sarma, was killed in the firing at Burha, but it was held up as another example of police brutality. All over Assam, however, the police were finding themselves targets of mob fury. "They have lost all fear for the *lal topis*," said a sub-inspector at the Mangaldoi Police Station, "and they don't realise that we are ourselves grief-stricken at having to kill our brotters."

Mass Mourning: A dirt track branches off the highway between Saktola bridge and Sipajhar, and it leads to a huge crowd milling around half a dozen pandals thatched with banana leaves. In a circle sit a group of Muslim maulvis and Hindu priests, reciting a memorial service. A tiered memorial plaque topped by the distinctive All Assam Students Union (AASU) flag is showered with flowers by mourners.

The meeting is the *adyasradh* for Kadir Ali, one of the 'martyrs' killed by Circle Inspector Handique. Premeshwar Sar local AASU leader, who is evading a w for his arrest, assumes the spokesma "The people thought they would get tion peacefully," he says angrily. "T use all possible force to stop the el We are prepared to give our lives. I the people's determination—even w were surrounded by police firing a they continued to set fire to the bridge. We are prepared to walk to G by foot through the fields, but w destroy all the bridges."

"Look at this crowd," says a young man. "Both the Hindus and th lims are mourning Kadir Ali. We h sworn to oppose this tyrant governm Hindus with fire in their hands, the M with their eyes on the crescent

A similar meeting is being Bardolguri village, 15 km away, to five other victims of police firing. N Medhi, joint secretary of the Ka Parishad in Mangaldoi, says that a employees have heeded the call by t the All Assam Gana Sangram P (AAGSP) for an 18-day non-coo movement from February 5. "The

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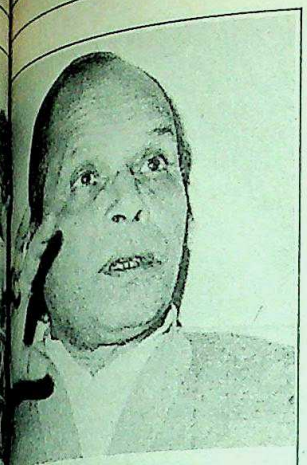


"I came from Mymensingh before partition but the agitators still say I am a foreigner. We have been forced to organise ourselves and we will vote for our survival in the land we have tended with our blood and sweat."

ABDUL WASID AHMED, panchayat employee in Khondokopara

trying to arrest us so that they can for election duty," says Medhi, "but all kicking. I was transferred to Cachar and then suspended when I refused to there is a warrant out for me under Internal Security Act (NSA)."

Repressive Measures: The NSA is just the many laws used by the despairing Government to cow down recalcitrant employees. The Assam Executive Powers (Special Powers) Act, 1983, empowers any district-level official with the to arrest an agitationist and keep him detained for six months. The Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) has been used to arrest thousands of government employees who have refused to obey orders. Section 144 has been clamped on the entire state. Last week, Assam had been flooded with detachments of the CRPF, and 36 battalions of the Haryana Armed Police, the Punjab Armed Constabulary, the Provincial Armed Constabulary of Uttar Pradesh, the Assam Police's armed sections, the BSF, and the Home Guards. At a conservative estimate they added up to a total of 1.5 lakh men in uniform to enforce law and order—one man for every 57 voters.

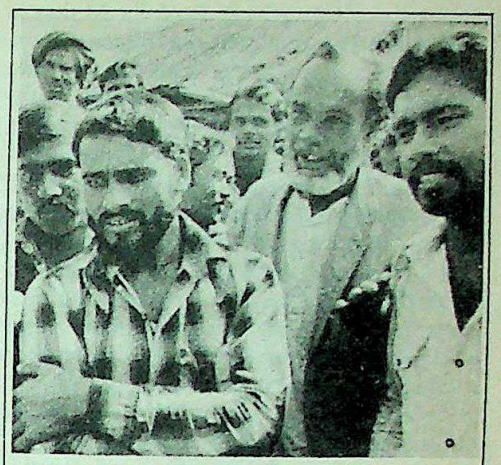
"The sleeping tiger has been awakened," says Sarada Kumar Saharia, an advocate in Mangaldoi, "and we will see how elections are held here. We are not fools—every clerk in Mangaldoi listens to the BBC for the correct news." Saharia reads out from an AASU bulletin: "*Dhar jharo dhar bhai, aru sabar samai nai, chai thakute mukhat kebol, dhoril kajal chhai*" (take up your brooms, brothers; there is no time to waste; we have been watching for too long; our faces have been blackened with ashes).

MANGALDOI was where it all began in early 1979, and the man who most directly helped in bringing the foreigners' issue into raging controversy was Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharyya. Deputy inspector general (DIG) of police (borders) at that time, Bhattacharyya's undisguised involvement with agitation leaders led to his imprisonment under the NSA for a year from January 1981.

Dismissed from service, Bhattacharyya lives today in the Beltola area, 5 km beyond Dispur. The ex-DIG's voice is full of venom and twisted logic, and it rings through the luxuriously appointed house called 'Wilderness'. Bhattacharyya's role in Assam's recent history began after the Lok Sabha member from Mangaldoi, Hiralal Patowary, died and a by-election had to be held to fill the parliamentary seat.

On May 9, 1979, Janata chief minister Golap Borbora ordered Bhattacharyya to detect any foreigners (illegal immigrants from Bangladesh) on the Mangaldoi voters' list. In a very short while, the DIG located precisely 47,658 'foreigners'. The election department had only 10,000 printed forms for entering objections to names included in the voters' list, so Bhattacharyya got 40,000 more forms cyclostyled. "I found 14,406 foreigners in Anwara Taimur's constituency alone," says Bhattacharyya proudly, "and remember, she won in the last election with a majority of 9,206 votes."

State-wide Reaction: The uproar over the Mangaldoi rolls sparked off the state-wide anti-foreigners movement that has snowballed into today's macabre situation. In August 1979, after the Lok Sabha was dissolved, Borbora asked Bhattacharyya to extend his detection operation to 80 Assembly segments of six Lok Sabha constituencies in Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Mangaldoi, Tezpur and Diphu; later, Assam's Chief Secretary R.S. Paramasivam—also recalled from the state in disgrace for his sympathies with the agitationists—ordered Bhattacharyya to check out the Gauhati, Dibrugarh and Jorhat constituencies. By early 1980, Bhattacharyya and his zealous policemen had located no less than 5,87,000 foreigners in these constituencies. "I went strictly by the National Register of Citizens, 1951, and the voters' rolls for successive elections," claims Bhattacharyya. "Under the Foreigners' Act, the onus for proving citizenship rests on the suspect."



"Satyagraha has taken new forms in Assam—black-outs, janata curfews, bandhs. But we are confused and hurt now: How can we have non-violence when atrocities are committed every day?"

—BIRENDRA KUMAR BHATTACHARYA, Jnanpith award winning novelist

Last fortnight Bhattacharyya was travelling through Assam's tea-garden areas, trying to persuade the labourers, the *cha banua hampraday*, to abstain from voting. "We are accused of being a communal movement directed only against immigrant Muslims," he bursts out, "and of over three lakh foreigners driven out between 1958 and 1976 not a single man was Hindu, I agree, but from the 5.8 lakh foreigners I helped detect, 55 per cent were Hindus. Every Hindu means a vote for the communists. The entire Brahmaputra valley, once an oasis of nationalism in this desert of insurgency, is surrounded by Marxist expansionists and Bengali cultural expansionists. If Mrs Gandhi wants to retain Assam as a colony, the reaction will be proportionate. Assam is no more a federating unit of the Indian Union, but an occupied territory."

Every important agitation leader in Assam is currently underground, and everybody, intelligence sources included, agrees that the Government committed a grave blunder by arresting all the major AASU-AAGSP leaders the moment their plane touched down at Gauhati's Borjhar airport on January 6, after their talks with the Centre in Delhi had failed. The arrested leaders,

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chiefly AASU's President Prafulla Mahanta and General Secretary Bhrigu Phukan, were recognised as moderates. "Their arrests have allowed the extremists to take over the movement," says a highly placed intelligence official, "and they have gone underground."

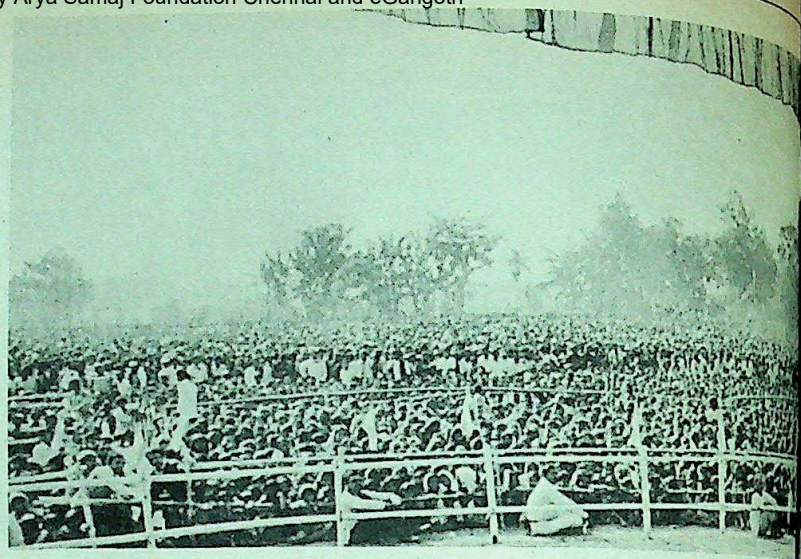
Planned Strategy: Within AASU itself, the arrested leaders' posts have quickly been filled by the second rank. Mahanta's work is now looked after by Nagen Sarma, and Phukan's by Nurul Hussain. Arup Bardoloi has taken over Biraj Sarma's place in the AAGSP hierarchy, and Convenor Atul Bora has been replaced temporarily by Pabindra Deka.

Inside a room in the Gauhati Medical College sits a group of 20 students, all of them on the run from police, and either in charge of local AASU units or the All Gauhati Students Union (AGSU). Mohammed Nikibur Zaman, president of the All Kamrup District Students Union (AKDSU), says that they are all busy organising the anti-election campaign. "The movement is spontaneous," he says, "after all, three years have passed and today there is a renewed phase. Right now our plans extend only until the elections, and we are doing everything possible to thwart them. After the elections there will be a new movement, a new programme; we will see that the newly-formed government cannot continue."

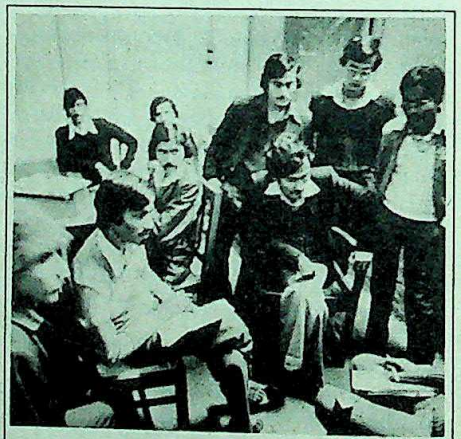
Dr Kamalakanta Kalita, general secretary of the Gauhati Medical College (GMC) Junior Doctors' Association, admits that there has been a lot of violence. "We condemn violence, but there are bad elements everywhere," he says. Bijon Kumar Mahajan, vice-president of the AGSU, says that the movement leaders have been amazed at the numbers in which people are coming out to obstruct the election process. "We are very sure that the turn-out on polling days will be miserable," he says.

Coordination: At Alochoka village, near Sipajhar, Atul Goswami describes how the agitationists have organised in the districts. "All communication, since press censorship was imposed, is through cyclostyled bulletins or word of mouth," he says, "but we manage to communicate orders and plans for janata curfews and black-outs." Goswami is the AASU adviser for Darrang district; he says that all the 43 executive committee members of AASU have fanned out into the districts to coordinate the agitation's present phase. "Essentially, the foreigners' issue is political," says Rajya Sabha independent MP Ajit Kumar Sarma in Gauhati, "and although the agitation leaders do not harbour political designs now, a large number of boys are getting very good political training in the districts."

Whether the total compliance with the leadership's calls for janata bandhs, janata curfews, or even janata 'arrests' of violators, and city-wide black-outs, is due to fear or support, the passions the elections have aroused among the Assamese are ferocious. Late on February 5, barely a hundred yards from the Sadar Police Thana in Gauhati, a group of young women take out a torchlight procession, shrilly shouting anti-election slogans. Suddenly a police black maria swoops down on the intersection and a burly inspector jumps out with his lathi-wielding men. The processionists melt as suddenly as they appeared, throwing away their flam ches; every house in the locality is p into darkness as the lights are simul ly switched off, leaving the policeme in utter darkness, looking warily abo



Mrs Gandhi addressing a meeting in the area of Moirabari:



"We are doing everything to thwart the elections. After that there will be a new movement and we will see that the newly-formed government cannot continue."
—M.N. ZAMAN of the All Kamrup District Students Union

A little distance away, in the ca pital, visitors are conducted to beds cards on them, announcing the his each patient's martyrdom. In one Paresh Deka, Kanti Deka and Jyotish all injured in police firing at Cheng Barpeta, on January 23. In another victims of firing near Sipajhar on F 2—Jadab Nath, whose spleen h removed, and Golok Nath, whose has a bullet embedded in it.

But the largest cluster of anxiou hovers around three men, covered fr to feet with severe third-degree bu lad Sarma, Chitra Barua and Tapa say the agitation leaders, were tosse men into the fire that had engulfed t development office at Sipajhar on F 3. The Government insists that t young men were burnt while they w ting fire to the office building. Ther bodies are topped by tents of red b and the doctors are trying to locate Chitra Barua's badly-burnt skin for venous drip. Prahlad Sarma dies evening. The hospital ward become mage spot in Gauhati.

THE CONGRESS(I)'S cand candidate for the Barpeta L seat lives in a house in the M ti area in Barpeta town, guarded by ny of CRPF and Bihar Military P Baharul Islam resigned from the Court on January 13 to fulfil his "d people of Assam". Later last m bombs placed below his car explo

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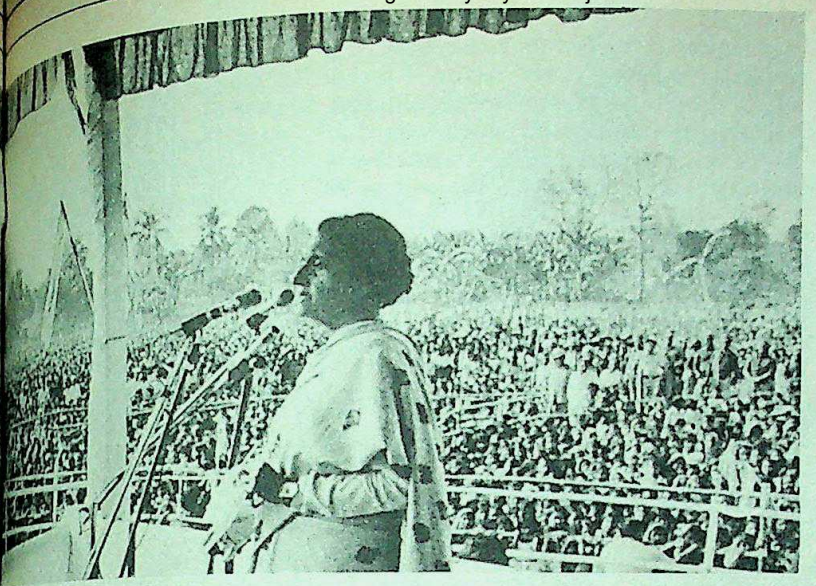

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The road to Barpeta through Howli singularly bereft of electoral cam- although Barpeta lies in Kamrup and within a strong borough of Bengali voters. Every shop in the market has a black flag hanging out- protest police firings in the area. Bar- once the stronghold of Fakhruddin Ahmed, finance minister in Bimala Chaliha's ministry and later a Cen- minister who rose to the Presidency of before the Emergency. Along with Haque Choudhury, Ahmed is alleg- agitation leaders to have directly large-scale immigration of Mus- from Bangladesh into the char areas the Brahmaputra, not very far Barpeta, in order to build up vote the Congress. In December 1979, violence broke out in Barpeta the late President's widow Abida travelled under heavy guard to file nomination for the 1980 Lok Sabha

Seven kilometres from Barpeta, a track branches off the highway to Gorbala village, where Baharul Islam a meeting. On the way back his car down by clusters of people, but, his chief placed daintily over his mouth off the dust, Islam gestures to his speed on.

Finally, the Islam campaign stops at a spot on the highway to the newsmen chasing him. It consists Ambassador car, with Islam in the back seat between two them, another rifle-holding guard

sitting in the front seat, and followed by a bus carrying 50 CRPF jawans. There is no Congress(I) flag on the car, no loudspeaker, and Islam looks worriedly arround at the countryside as he talks.

"I am going to Baliguri village, near Kalgachia, for another meeting," he says, "and my security men say it is better to return to Barpeta by sunset." Islam thinks Assam's agony can be solved only by a "new leadership thrown up from the youth". A long-time resident of Gauhati and a one-time Socialist, Islam has clearly been allotted Barpeta to draw on Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed's vote banks. "My opponents accuse me of not belonging to Barpeta," he says, "but this is false. I was born in Rangiya—70 km away—and came often to Barpeta as a lawyer. I even campaigned for Fakhruddin sahib here. I am sure I'll win with god's grace."

"If Mrs Gandhi wants to retain Assam as a colony, the reaction will be proportionate. Assam is no more a federating unit of the Indian Union, but an occupied territory."

—HIRANYA KUMAR BHATTACHARYYA, a former DIG

God may ultimately decide to keep Barpeta's tradition alive and send Baharul Islam into the House of the People. But he faces a stiff challenge from another 'outsider' Muslim candidate, A.F. Golam Osmani. Osmani switched from the Janata to become Anwara Taimur's ablest lieutenant in the Cachar region during her ministry. Today he is contesting the election as an independent candidate, supported by the Left and Democratic Alliance (LDA). Osmani was also one of the progenitors of two organisations set up to protect the Muslims' interests after the agitation began—the All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU) and the Citizens' Rights Preservation Committee (CRPC).

Confident Contender: Dressed in a natty suit and a silk scarf, Osmani is holding court outside his campaign office at Howli, his jollity in sharp contrast to his opponent's godly ways. "I have been getting tremendous public support," he says, "and the Congress(I) is desperate. Union Railway Minister Ghani Khan Chowdhury has said in meetings in this area that the Muslims will be thrown back into Bangladesh if they do not vote for the Congress(I). But the violence has prevented me from visiting some areas in my constituency."

Osmani admits that in mixed Assamese-Bengali areas there might be no voting at all because the Bengalis would be afraid of reprisals. Nripen Saha, who migrated from Mymensingh in East Bengal at the time of Partition, says that he will not vote in order to stay on in Howli.

It is clear that the Muslims are unsure about whether to vote at all, and if so whom to vote for. Many of them tend instinctively to favour the Congress(I). Mohammed Hakimuddin, a tobacco and lime vendor at Hatejana village near Nalbari, says that he will vote for the independent candidate, Ismail Hussain Khan in the Howli Assembly constituency, but prefers Baharul Islam for the Lok Sabha seat. "The majority of the Muslims will vote for the Congress(I)," he says, "so why waste my vote?" At Khondokorpara village, Hassan Shahid, a law student in Barpeta, says that only the Congress(I) can solve the Assam problem. But Tajuddin Ahmed says that Muslim voters surrounded by Assamese have been advised not to vote at all.

The Bengalis are caught in a cruel dilemma. Throughout the agitation, anger

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against them has frequently flared into senseless violence, and they realise too that the problem of the foreigners is intractable and insoluble. The tendency among the community, therefore, has been to stick together along religious lines, the Muslims preferring to place their fates in the hands of the Congress(I) and the Hindus veering towards the communists. "We have to think of the Congress(I)'s interests," says Abdul Ahmed, Wasid a panchayat employee who is looking after the party booth in Khondokorpara. "If things continue like this the Assamese will throw us out at gunpoint. We will never allow that. I came from Mymensingh in Partition, but the agitators will say I'm a foreigner. We have been forced to ... ourselves, and we will vote for our ... on the land we have tended with our ... and sweat."

Minority Vote: The Congre...

THE AGITATION

Heart Of The Matter

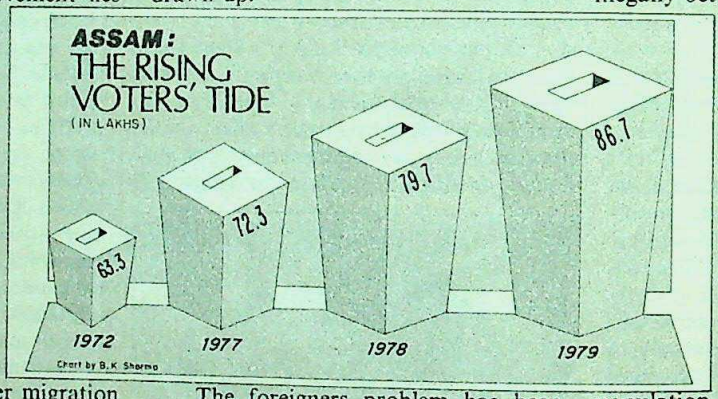
THE CRUX of Assam's anti-foreigner movement is: who is a foreigner? And the state is in turmoil because the Government and the students have been unable to decided on agreed criteria. Complex and multiple laws, the open border with what is now Bangladesh and electoral compulsions have compounded the problem.

The genesis of the movement lies in Partition, when hundreds of thousands of refugees from East Bengal streamed into the areas that presently constitute Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, and Bihar. Until 1971, the Central Government's implicit policy was to give shelter to all Hindu refugees and to deport all Muslim infiltrators from East Pakistan. After March 25, 1971, however, the Government of India and Bangladesh agreed that all further migration into India would be treated as infiltration and all such infiltrators whether Hindu or Muslim, would be deported.

Initial Encouragement: Immigration from East Bengal was initially encouraged by Sir Mohammad Saadulla's Muslim League ministry during World War II, so that the lush Brahmaputra valley's *char* areas bordering the river would be settled for the Government's 'grow more food' campaign. The torrent of migration that began then has still not stopped, and the Assamese repeatedly quote a British census official's fear in 1931 that "in another thirty years Sibsagar district will be the only part of Assam in which an Assamese will find himself in Assam."

The unchecked influx of East Bengalis into Assam after Partition led to the passing of the Immigrants Expulsion (from Assam) Act, 1950, allowing only those displaced by civil disturbance to come to Assam. This act was repealed in 1957; of 7.65 lakh people registered under it, only 1.43 lakh applied for citizenship. The Nehru-Liaquat Pact then agreed that all those who returned to Assam by December 31, 1950 would be considered as Indian citizens.

This agreement in actuality did not adhere to Article 6 of the Constitution, which says that those who came to India after July 19, 1948 must apply for citizenship. The All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) have from the time the agitation began in early 1979 insisted that the best cut-off date would be 1951, when a National Register of Citizens was drawn up.



The foreigners problem has been compounded by the array of laws that govern citizenship—the Constitution itself, as well as the Foreigners Act of 1946, the Passport Act of 1952, the Citizenship Act of 1956 and the Restricted Areas Act of 1963.

Abnormal Increases: The figures for illegal immigration, detection of foreigners, and their deportation have varied over the last four years, and both the agitators and their opponents have large data banks to prove their points. Between 1951 and 1961 Assam's population increased by 36 per cent, well above the national average of 24 per cent, and Paper 1 of the Census Report in 1963 says that at least 2.2 lakh illegal immigrants appear to have settled down in Assam. Between 1961 and 1971 Assam's population increased by 35 per cent, again well above the national average. Between 1951 and 1971, however, the Government officially deported only 1.9 lakh persons, leaving 2.8 lakh acknowledged aliens in Assam. Between 1972 and 1978, 99,580 Bangladeshi nationals were deport... more than 60 per cent of them Hindu...

By January this year, the AAS... AAGSP leaders had had seven round... tripartite talks with the Government ... opposition leaders, and 21 rounds of ta... with the Centre since early 19... Officially, the Government has agreed ... March 25, 1971 as the cut-off date, ... plicitly agreeing to the deportation of ... migrants since then. The agitation l... ders, however, have not been able to ... the Government to agree to disenfranch... isement and dispersal in other parts ... India of all those who entered the s... illegally between 1961 and 1971—wh... numbers are unknown s... no attempts have been m... to detect them. At the l... round of talks, the Gove... ment took the position th... until the 1965 war with P... kistan, successive waves ... migration to Assam ha... taken place and on humani... tarian grounds such m... grants could not be d... placed.

The only other auth... tative indicator of abnor... population increases in Assam co... from the electoral rolls. From 63 l... voters in 1972 the figure leaped to 72 l... in 1977, 79 lakh in 1978, and 86 lakh ... 1979. Moreover, between 1951 and 19... the number of Assamese-speaking pe... grew by 79.6 per cent; one explana... for this is that lakhs of immigrants ch... to give Assamese as their mother ton... The agitation leaders fear that if a ce... is held, the Assamese-language fig... will drop dramatically if the immigr... should choose to revert to Bengali.

Although no precise estimates ... about the numbers of aliens in Assam ... agitation leaders have worked out, a ... possible birth rates and progeny, a fi... of 7.8 million for all illegal residen... Assam. The Government of course ... jects this figure but privately, governm... officials fear that the final numbe... potential deportees might approach ... lakh mark—and that will be an ... national problem with no prospe... cooperation from the Ershad regime ... Dhaka.

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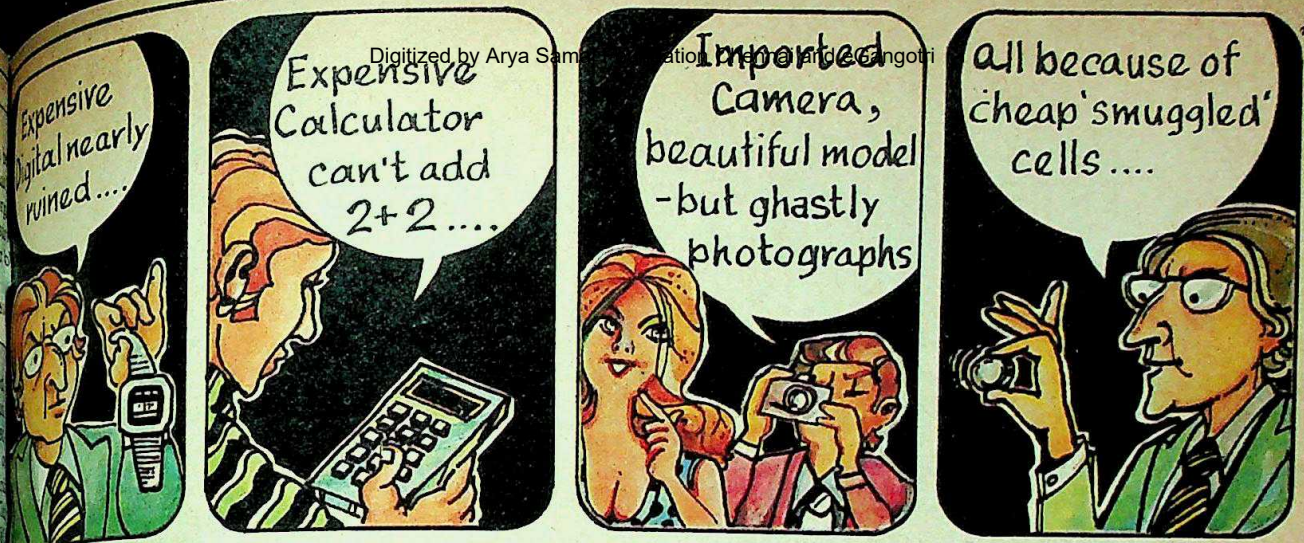

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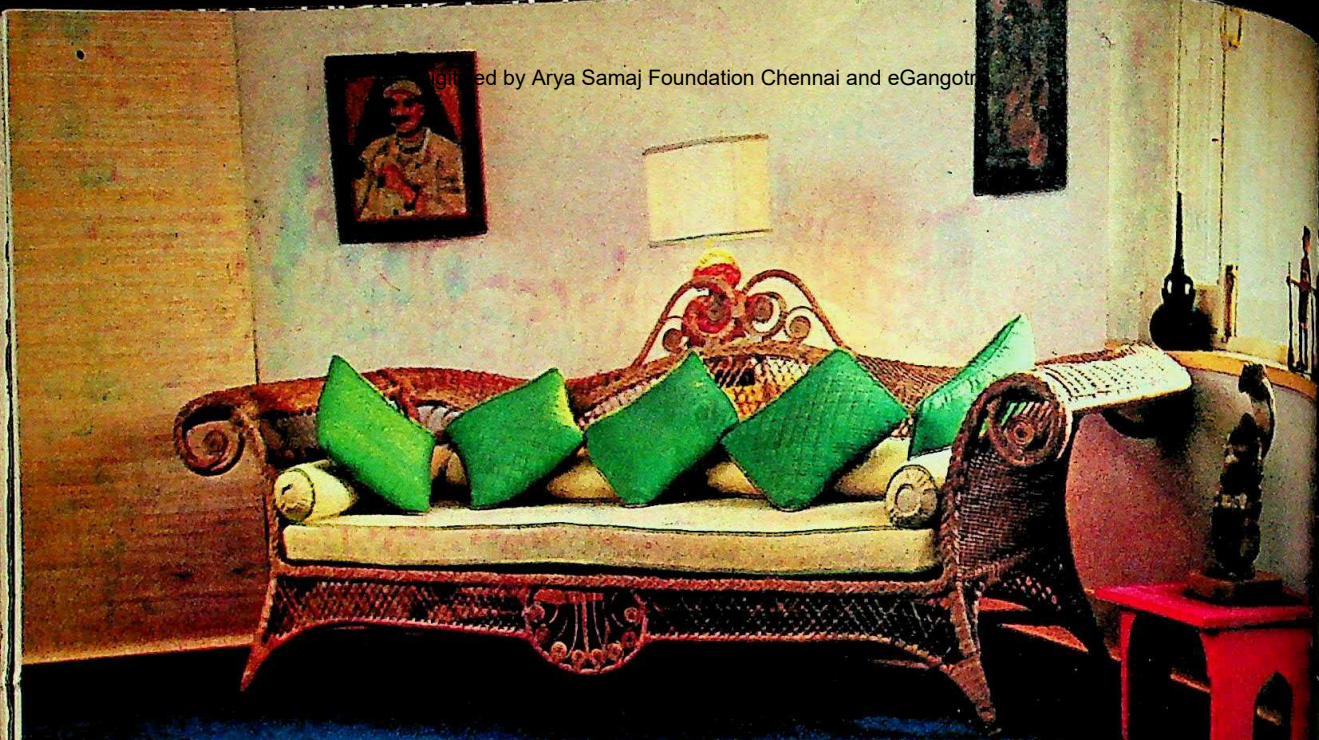

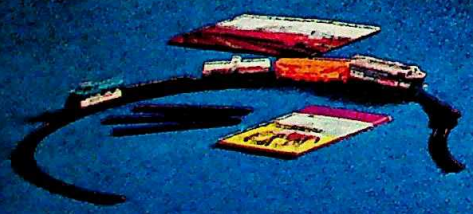

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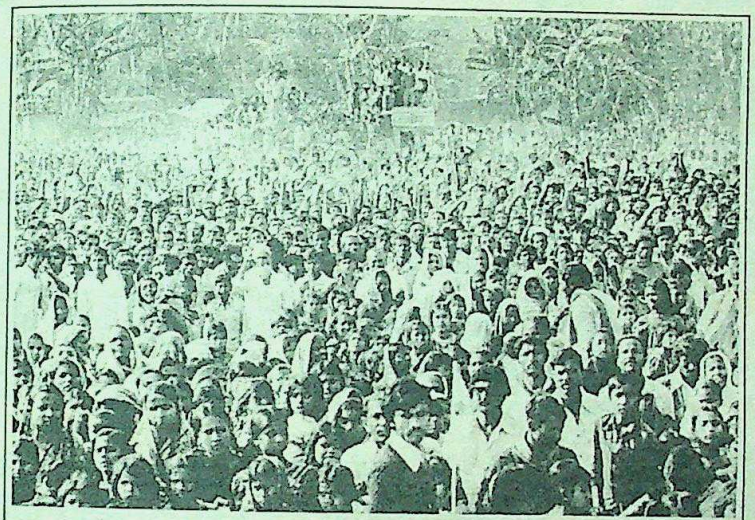
heavily on the Muslim vote in the but that vote may not be as as before. The agitation itself has the Muslims' morale and generated a bloody confrontation if the are sought to be thrown out at a Nevertheless, 26 per cent of the filed this time are by Muslim against 18 per cent in the last elections in 1978. At least 32 of the I's 126 tickets have gone to Mus- the party's dependence on minority reflected in the other ticket allo- —nine to Scheduled Caste candi- to Scheduled Tribe candidates, five tribes, 25 to the other Classes, 5 to tea labour, and three to im- Nepali candidates.

Gandhi's election Assam reflected this sec- dependence. Warned by reports that the si- was extremely dange- struck all Assamese her itinerary. The mee- addressed were all in Kamrup, Nowgong, Anglong and Cachar —all heavily populated migrant Bengali Muslim voters and tribals. Gauhati, on February Gandhi chose to land the Maligaon Railway on the outskirts of the her last meeting. Mali- Bengali suburb, and is cut off from the rest of by a wall of anger and

still, Anwara Tai- ardship of the state the Congress(I) valua- port. The tea-garden lobby, which Taimur had demanded 16 but was given only five, Assam Cha Mazdoor (CMS), traditionally aligned with the (I), has revolted against the party with its units in Tezpur, Golaghat, and Dibrugarh refusing to cooperate elections. The Jammat-ul-Ulema-e- has not been given any tickets and only the pro-Taimur Muslims the maximum tickets.

Support: The indigenous Muslims and the followers of Idris, finance minister under have also turned against the party. in addition, has become increas- with the extremist Jamait-e- and even the AAMSU and the CRPC out of the Congress orbit with the exit of leaders like Golam Osmani from the party. "The Muslims in Assam have also noticed how Mrs Gandhi refused to meet the Muslim MP's who had wanted to discuss the rising tide of communalism with her," says a Muslim leader in Gauhati, "and also her belated visits, on the eve of her trip to Assam, to Meerut, Aligarh and Baroda to express sympathy for the minority victims there."

Neither is the LDA facing an easy task. On February 7, the LDA's first major election rally in Gauhati was sought to be scuttled by a day-long bandh called by agitationists. Sharad Pawar, leader of the Congress(S), which with 37 candidates is the leading contender in the alliance, failed to turn up. Only E.M.S. Namboodiripad of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and Inderjit Gupta of the Communist Party of India (CPI) came from outside to canvass support. Judges Field, where the rally was held, can take up to 15,000 people but only a tenth of that number turned up for the rally, and the field was ringed by Assam Police and CRPF men. Anti-election meetings addressed by politicians like the BJP's Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Janata Party's Ravindra Varma, the Democratic Socialist Party's Raj Narain, and the Lok Dal's Charan Singh, on the other hand, were able to draw much larger crowds.



Muslims at one of Mrs Gandhi's rallies

The Bengalis are caught in a cruel dilemma. Throughout, the anger against them has flared into senseless violence. The tendency, therefore, is to stay along religious lines—the Muslims preferring the Congress(I) and the Hindus the communists.

SHEELKUMAR Lalchand Khosla was appointed as Assam's chief electoral officer (CEO) in September last year, long before the talks with the agitation leaders broke down. Ever since the elections were announced on January 6, Khosla has been working 15-hour days from his office in the Janata Bhavan at Dispur to superintend and execute the elections.

"We had to get ballot papers printed in presses outside Assam and fly them down," says Khosla, "and one of my major problems has been to get enough personnel to man the election machinery. Even then, against a requirement of at least six people per polling booth, we will be able to provide only three."

Polling will take place in 12,280 booths, and this means a requirement of at least 36,000 people. The non-cooperation movement, however, has led to government employees all over Assam refusing to perform election duty—leading to the mass induction of employees from 35 Central ministries, the Bihar Government, and even Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Foreign Service (IFS) probationers. Dozens of specially chartered Indian Airlines flights have been landing in Gauhati with their cargoes of shanghaied election personnel.

Staggered Schedule: Even so, polling has been spread over three days, each polling day separated from the next by two-day intervals. "This is in order to facilitate movement of personnel from one area to another in case we fall short of people," says Khosla. On February 14 polling was to cover 6,305 booths in 62 constituencies; the schedule of February 17 was 3,392 booths in 37 constituencies, and 2,583 booths in 27 constituencies on February 20.

Even Khosla admits that polling in at least 30 constituencies may be "very difficult", but he is clear that even if a single vote is cast in a constituency it will make for a "legal" election. Khosla's major brainwave has been to arrange lavish compensation for government officials or policemen killed or injured while on election duty—the first time in India's history that such incentives have been offered. Each gazetted officer's family, in the event of his death, will get Rs 1 lakh, and each non-gazetted officer's Rs 50,000.

Such compensatory rules, however, expire at midnight on February 22, and will not cover post-electoral risks. Disablement is

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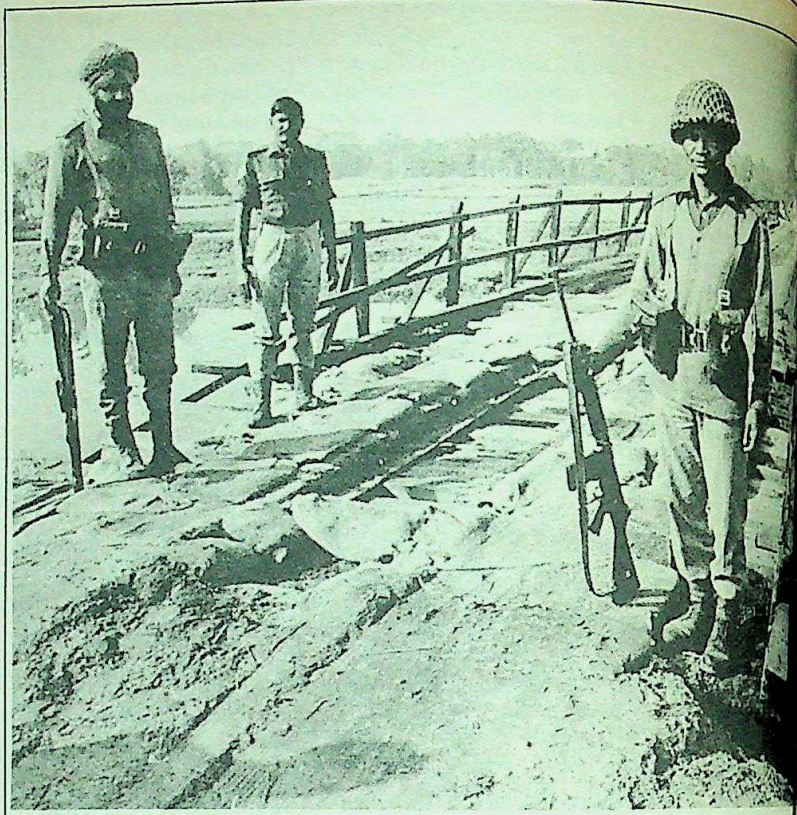
being compensated under the Workmen's Compensation Act. In addition, all government employees from outside Assam have been offered generous daily allowances, an extra month's pay—and in Bihar, full salary payment to the next of kin until retirement age in case of death. Many of the employees thus brought in, realised the gravity of the situation only after they were transported to their stations in the districts. At Moriani, on February 9, 67 Bihar employees refused to perform their duties unless all their benefits and insurance sums were doubled.

Bloody Toll: In the 10 days after February 2, the toll in the anti-election agitation had shot up to 70. In a matter of weeks, the *desbhaktas* of the Assam movement had nearly doubled their roster of martyrs, begun when the first victims of police firing died in early 1980. Every evening when the setting sun thrusts a flaming orange tongue into the grey, placid waters of the Brahmaputra, groups of Gauhatians gather on the riverbank to renew their pledge to fight the 'last battle of Saraighat'. Saraighat was the spot across the Brahmaputra, now reached by a huge road-and-rail bridge, where the legendary Ahom general Lachit Barphukan had repulsed the invading Mughal army.

Four years of suspended agony have returned Assam to a bloodier square one, and no other individual is perhaps better qualified to observe this agony than Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Assamese novelist, short story writer and poet, who won the 1979 Jnanpith Award for his body of work. In his house, high up on a hill facing the Raj Bhawan, Bhattacharyya says his feelings are summed up by what one of Macbeth's fief lords, Ross said when the king's tyrannies became unbearable: "Alas, poor country almost afraid to know itself. It cannot be called our mother, but our grave."

"A non-violent movement presupposes certain preconditions," says Bhattacharyya, "like civil liberties, and press freedom. The Government has used an array of anti-satyagraha tactics—not allowing processions and restricting freedom of expression. So we require inventiveness, and satyagraha has taken on new forms in Assam—back-outs, janata curfews, bandhs. But we are very confused and hurt now: how can we have non-violence when atrocities are committed every day?"

Suppressed Anger: Bhattacharyya feels the elections have driven discontent underground. "And there is no genius like Gandhi or Jayaprakash Narayan to give such discontent an outlet," he points out. "The moderate leaders have been jailed, but even then the forms of the agitation are still largely peaceful. In Jorhat, for instance, a citizens' committee has been formed to expose atrocities and to call upon the people to remain sober. But anger against the system is growing."



A brainwave has been to arrange lavish compensation for government officials or policemen killed or injured while on election duty....In the event of a gazetted officer's death his family will get Rs 1 lakh and a non-gazetted officer's Rs 50,000.

As a mass movement, Bhattacharyya says the Assam agitation has drawn a far greater response than even JP's Bihar movement in 1974, and has lasted longer than any programme launched by Gandhi himself. "Yet, we recognise that we are dealing with the existing political system," he says, "and I feel that the best thing in that case would be to link up with a brother movement. Such a linkage is difficult to visualise just now."

WHAT does the future hold for Assam? Bhattacharyya speaks cautiously when he says: "Whether the growing alienation will result in a break with Indian cultural traditions, to which Assam is still bound, is difficult to say." But Ajit Sarma, MP, is more forthright: "Even if the elections are held technically," he says, "the consequences will be terrible. I am afraid that the movement will become continuously violent. Once the nation loses the loyalty of the Brahmaputra valley, in five years lose the entire North-east."

There is no doubt that the current of violence promises to extend through tion week and beyond. Intelligence had warned the Centre that the time not right for holding elections, and intelligence official says that in than 40 constituencies can valid elec held at all. Yet, Indira Gandhi has deaf ear to the danger and the sions. Her chief advisers consist of Prakash Mehrotra, who wears his ress(I) loyalty on his sleeve, Special in the Union Home Ministry P.P. whose only distinguishing antecede chief secretaryship of Bihar under Mishra, and Samar Das, inspector police in charge of intelligence.

Das, who gained notoriety Anwara Taimur's regime when he persuade opposition MLA's to defe Congress(I), has contradicted every intelligence report. Violence is so

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There is a definite pattern to the Assam violence and the agitators were taking care to burn all bridges to polling booths, block development offices and schools so as to cut off reinforcements or polling parties.

ed, and only bridges that are totally es reported. Das has also seen to it ounger brother Ranju Das is posted r as deputy inspector-general in l security.

ar Pattern: There is a definite pat- the Assam violence, and last fort- e agitators were taking care to burn ges providing access to polling block development offices, and ildings, so as to cut off reinforce- polling parties. Dozens of subdivi- dquarters have been funnelling va- formation to the agitation leaders. n leaders of the movement like ce-President Atul Koch, adviser Barma, and Pabindra Deka of the s abiding arrest and master-minding s in this violent gamble. Prabin also heads the shadowy Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Parishad, a paramilitary n also underground, and Joy Nath who headed the Swechha Sevak Sena), the movement's terrorist wing, is under arrest but has set up an organisation that is now entrenched in every district.

The SSB is being actively aided by former officials of the Special Services Bureau, a government-created guerrilla outfit designed to thwart Chinese infiltration in the '60s. Biraja Nanda Choudhury, an explosives expert who had set up training camps near Margherita in Upper Assam, was arrested on January 31 at Dibrugarh. Intelligence sources believe, however, that the agitationists are getting liberal supplies of bitumen from sympathisers in the Public Works Department for fuelling arson, gelatine from the Border Roads Organisation depots in neighbouring North-eastern states, and grenades from Mokokchung in Nagaland. Dissemination of propaganda has become extremely sophisticated, and in Darrang district, a group of young agitationists trained in guerrilla tactics in Burma is reported to be girding itself for a far more violent post-election programme.

Fearful Consequences: The emotional effects of the election will create fearful ripple effects within Assam's fragile social structure. The agitation itself promises to become much more violent and disruptive if the elections go through. "Each MLA will become a target for assassination, and we will impose a people's government on Assam; the ministry will have to fall in a very short time," says an agitation leader in Gauhati.

Violent as the passions aroused by the elections were, they also spawned a chain reaction of grief. All along the road towards Nalbari in Kamrup district on February 9 stood young men and women with garlands in their hands, waiting to pay homage to the men who had died the previous day in police firing near Piplabari village as their bodies were taken to their homes. At Piplabari, Mahesh Chandra Talukdar's seven children and stunned wife loudly mourned the farmer's death. Talukdar was among a 5,000 strong crowd that had gone on the rampage and had attacked a police van the previous day.

But the social schisms are clear, and they run through the length and breadth of the state. The Bengali region of Cachar —which voted in the only two Lok Sabha members out of 14 from Assam in 1980—is now sundered totally from the valley and Upper Assam, and sources say that the Government might even think of trisecting the state into the valley, Cachar, and an autonomous tribal district. Within the valley itself, however, the gulf between the Assamese, the immigrant Bengali Muslims and Hindus has never been wider than it is at the moment.

Long before the final results of the polling come in, the decision of the Assamese people is clear—an angry, emotional and violent rejection of the democratic process as the Centre sees it. Once again, the Government has failed to assuage feelings and chosen to increase the alienation of an entire —and strategically vital—region. Already, essential supplies to the rest of the North-east by rail or road have thinned to a trickle because of violence and road blocks. The flow of oil from Upper Assam, resumed forcibly in 1981, has once again been halted.

Propped up by an army of paramilitary troops, consoled by a Constitution that is being conveniently interpreted to suit political expediency, Indira Gandhi may have capped a lengthening list of blunders last fortnight by committing her biggest mistake in Assam. The tragedy is that the prime minister will not be asked to pay the price for her myopia. The cost will be extracted from the nation's collective will and faith in a just democracy.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG in Gauhati

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CONGRESS (I)

Shabby Window Dressing

IT IS about the most impressive sprucing up the building at 24 Akbar Road has ever witnessed since the Congress(I) moved its headquarters there five years ago. The seedy partition walls were razed to the ground, giving way to modern teak-and-glass panels. The floors, dug up to be redone with marble chips, stared at the regular visitors with a new touch of unfamiliarity. The telephone lines were heaped in snaky coils, to be refitted into polyvinyl conduits and lodged inside the walls. Slick intercom sets, freshly unpacked, lay in one corner to be installed in the rooms. A furnishing contractor moved about busily with a copy of *Home Beautiful* in his hand. And Rajiv Gandhi, the newly-appointed general secretary of the All India Congress I Committee (AICC-I) stood amid the rubble in faded jeans.

In the welter of changes, big and small, within the party and the Government last fortnight, all initiated by the supposedly voluntary resignation of Sitaram Kesari, minister of state for parliamentary affairs on January 25 (INDIA TODAY, February 15), the most significant happening was the induction of Rajiv into the AICC(I) secretariat. It dwarfed in importance the other changes such as:

► the resignation of nine Central ministers, including two of Cabinet rank;

► the induction of seven new faces into the council of ministers;

► the promotion of five ministers;

► the replacement of two general secretaries of the AICC(I);

► the appointment of Kamalapati Tripathi, 79, as the working president; and

► the appointment of yet another old patriarch, Vasantrao Dada Patil, as the chief minister of Maharashtra.

Figure-head Only: The changes appeared to follow in what Kesari termed as "easy instalments". The air of New Delhi was thick with rumours of half a dozen more changes at the Cabinet level, to culminate in the dropping of at least three Congress(I) chief ministers. But, beyond the periodic reshuffling of the pack, the key to Mrs Gandhi's strategy was represented by Rajiv's appointment, and also partially by the nomination of Tripathi as the working president —a designation for which there is no provision in the party constitution.

Tripathi said his main task was to "ensure the continuance of the vital link between the party and the Government". Feeling obviously elated at the return of the long queue of callers at his residence on New Delhi's Janpath over two years after his summary dismissal as the railway minister, Tripathi asserted: "From now on, nobody has to encroach on the time of the prime minister with organisational problems." He was pinning his hopes on a return to the old style of functioning of the Congress Party, when the party leadership was the supreme arbiter in all matters of organisation and the party president carried an authority comparable only to that of the prime minister.

Restructuring the AICC(I) is a clever stratagem for Rajiv to occupy a vantage point but, as of now, he has given scant evidence of being able to mould the party according to his desires.

But Tripathi's hopes were deflated soon after the Delhi polls when C.M. Stephen was imposed by Mrs Gandhi as a general secretary without the knowledge of the working president. An agitated Tripathi found it hard to reconcile to the reality that he was indeed a figure-head party chief, and that his voice would be heard only as long as it did not contradict the voice of the 'real' president, Mrs Gandhi.

The rank and file of the Congress(I) were happy at Tripathi's appointment because they thought he could be an "effective conduit" between them and Mrs Gandhi. Said a young MP of the p was so demeaning an experience hours at the doors of M.L. Fot Gandhi's political aide). But no o spending two hours with Tripathiji. a family needs a grandfather." Ye everyone doubted that Tripathi w actual power, which was likely to be sed, as it has always been, in the Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv.

Key Figure: The appointment was greeted with orchestrated h from partymen all over the something that did not happen pathi's appointment was a "This was long overdue," said Lal, the chief minister of Haryan his sick-bed in New Delhi. "I w to propose this to Mrs Gand Hans Raj Sharma, president Punjab Congress(I). "He will a mism to the party. The youth w spired," said Veerappa Moily, the Congress(I) in the Karnataka tive Assembly. Defending R pointment stoutly, said Subrata jee, Congress(I) leader from W gal: "What is wrong if a politic son also chooses to become a leader? After all, a lot of doctors children into the medical profe legal practice often runs in the

Mukherjee's defence was tirely necessary, because the did not quite wait for the regulat Rajiv's authority to approach every minor matter. Even as his quarters at 2A, Motilal Nehr began to pale in significance, a command was already being to all. As an AICC(I), general secr phically summed it up, from

► the disgruntled Congress his *shikayet* (complaint), first goes lapatiji, who forwards it to Raj

► Rajiv then either takes a dec self or sends it to Mrs Gandhi;

► after that, the decision is down to Tripathi; and

► Tripathi makes it known grieved Congressman, not necess him that the decision is actu

This plan is actually refle blueprint of the new AICC(I) offi the name of Rajiv's security, a d has been totally marked off from the building, entry to which w prohibited except with prior app The fate of Rajiv's erstwhile hel

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Dhar, Arun Singh and Siddartha ...ot yet clear, but Tripathi will be ...to partymen for certain hours in a

...al Tasks: Tripathi has the unen-...k of serving as the buffer between ...nd the mother-and-son duopoly, ...ke all the flak in the process. In the ...y catastrophe, such as what hap-... Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka ... Tripathi can conveniently be made ...he can, while Rajiv corners all the ...r victory.

... Mrs Gandhi, Tripathi is truly the ...e hour. Neither too assertive nor ...al, Tripathi was removed from ...t once but twice by Mrs Gandhi, ...e chief minister of Uttar Pradesh in ...d then as the railway minister in ...Like H.N. Bahuguna, who was ...d twice by her, as the Uttar Pra-...d minister and later on as the 'se-...general, of the AICC(I), Tripathi ...ck back. So, the office of the ...president' may after all turn out ...passing phase; but what indeed ...have come to stay is the newly ...secretariat, with Stephen, a ...personality, saddled in it, not to ...the weighty presence of Rajiv.

...t from formulating strategy for ...general elections, the secretariat ...the party members into organi-...ports—"definitely by this year", ...promised. "In order to make ...," added Tripathi, "bogus ...will have to be eliminated, the ...the party membership will have ...fied, and the process of demo-...ce will have to be ensured from ...level upwards."

...today, all postings in the Cong-...are *ad hoc*, and all office-bearers ...nated. The party has learnt from ...experience of dissension and in-...that these cannot be swept under ...without maintaining a facade ...cracy. But nor can it give a rope ...long to the partymen, and ...to elect as office-bearers people ...not acquiesce in the realisation of ...'s strategic aim: that of ensuring ...ce as her successor.

...too, on his part, has travelled a ...from his days of "helping mum-...dynastic ambition of his mother is ...an issue for him to feel shy about, ...up with gestures of coyness. He is ...to giving commands. Nor does he ...massive build-up in four-colour ...was seen during the last round of ...in Andhra, Karnataka and Delhi. ...the other hand, he now finds it ...to adorn official chairs and allow ...fantastic adulation. His *Padayatra* along the Delhi streets before the elections was designed to project him before the people as a walking poster. And, as he moved into the office of the AICC(I) general secretary, the party was cynically reconciled to the fact of his overriding claim. There were muffled questions raised about his 'ability', but nobody seemed to question, even in private, the morality of it.

Rajiv too is reconciled to his undeserved and awkward elevation. But he cannot be overly blamed, because the atmosphere in the Congress(I) is indeed redolent of the pre-Magna Carta English court. However, though Rajiv is none too unwilling to wear the mantle, doubts will still chase him about his capacity to carry even the pliant bunch of Congressmen along. Restructuring of the AICC(I) is a clever stratagem for him to occupy a vantage point, but, as of now, he has given scant evidence of being able to mould the party according to his desire. His brother, Sanjay, had the distinction of choosing a team that thought exactly like him, and spoke his voice. Rajiv is yet to choose a large team; and, significantly, it is he who is speaking the voice of the old team. The people of Karnataka will take a long time to forget that Rajiv defended Gundu Rao in the elections.

Almost everyone doubts that Tripathi will wield actual power, which was likely to be centralised, as it has always been, in the hands of Mrs Gandhi...

The simultaneous changes in the Government too were being watched with trepidation. Anant Prasad Sharma, the Union communications minister, had to be shifted to the intensive care unit of the Railway Hospital (where he had been admitted on January 24 with a mild heart attack) immediately after he was asked to sign on a 'community' resignation letter (INDIA TODAY, February 15). Another Cabinet minister slipped out of the capital to spend a quiet day at the feet of the shrine of the Sai Baba of Shirdi. But more than being anxious about their careers, just about everyone in the ministry was racking his brains to figure out the criteria for the exclusions—or inclusions.

Strategy: Obviously, Mrs Gandhi had planned the reshuffle as a last-ditch effort to restore her party's image after her defeat in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. It was meant to synchronise with the Delhi polls and to create an all-round impression that she would indeed start a new chapter through a political blitz of sorts. The impression was rubbed in by convenient flashbacks to the 1963 Kamaraj plan in which her father had utilised the services of the late K. Kamaraj, former chief minister of Tamil Nadu, to cleanse the Cabinet of half a dozen of his critics, including Morarji Desai.

This time round Sitaram Kesari was cast in the role of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. His resignation from the ministry—which, he asserts, was "voluntary"—was followed by the mass resignation of every other minister. So overpowering was the air of impending doom that even Kesari, a lack-lustre politician, secured a niche in history, the purge being named the 'Kesari Plan'.

But the Kamaraj Plan and the Kesari Plan had hardly anything in common, except their initials. Though both came in the wake of the Congress's electoral debacles, the Kamaraj Plan was directed against Nehru's known adversaries—men with large followings in their home states and who were ideologically opposed to Nehru.

The Kesari Plan, on the other hand, swung its hatchet harmlessly, chopping down only two Cabinet ministers who had neither the power nor the inclination to pose a threat to Mrs Gandhi. The lone chief minister who lost his job, Babasaheb Bhosale, had hung on to power so far by evoking compassion rather than fear.

Surprises: Kedar Pandey, the former irrigation minister, whose resignation was promptly accepted, found it hard to conceal his surprise. "I'll serve the party in any capacity," he told INDIA TODAY with his chin held high. But his aides were speculating on a likely plan to "unsettle" the representation of Bihar: like Kesari, Pandey is from that state. And the other minister from Bihar, Bhishma Narain Singh, too, was in a way demoted, as the two prize portfolios of parlia-

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mentary affairs and works and housing were taken away from him in exchange for civil supplies.

C.M. Stephen, who followed Pandey, had reasons to preen his feathers following his appointment as a general secretary of the AICC(I). But even Stephen's friends could not cite a single reason why he deserved better treatment than Pandey.

The two inclusions at the Cabinet level were less confounding. Apart from the fact that both Vishwanath Pratap Singh and Kotla Vijayabhaskara Reddy had served as chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh (respectively) till last year, they shared the reputation of never having attracted charges of corruption. Similarly Harinath Mishra, the newly-appointed minister of state from Bihar, carried a 'clean' image, mainly earned by his timid submission before often-violent Opposition onslaughts as speaker of the Bihar Legislative Assembly between 1972 and 1977.

But the pat 'cleanliness first' theory falls to pieces in the face of the elevation of Kalpnath Rai as minister of state. Rai, whose name was connected with various fund-raising drives of the party since 1980, had to be relieved of his charge as a general secretary of AICC(I) last year following representations against him from a section of Maharashtra legislators.

The people connected with the organisation of the Ninth Asiad received a bonanza. Buta Singh, who had chaired the Games' Special Organising Committee, had a double bellyful first being sent to Maharashtra as the Centre's 'observer' in the exercise to find Bhosale's successor, and then by being promoted to Cabinet rank with three separate charges of parliamentary affairs, works and housing and sports. K.P. Singh Deo, yet another old Asiad hand, was rewarded with a ministership of state. Ram Niwas Mirdha, who had also sat on various Asiad committees, got a berth in the council of ministers, and so did S.M. Krishna, a Fulbright scholar and jurist from Karnataka.

Confused Objectives: But the changes carried very little clue to Mrs Gandhi's future plan of providing a direction to the party or the country; in fact it was not clear if she had any such plans. That she was shifting personnel with no clear objective was apparent even to members of her own Cabinet. Said a newly-appointed minister: "I'm thankful to her for having chosen me. But I can't tell you why I've been chosen; or why Buta Singh is expected to be a better minister than Kedar Pandey; or why Jagannath Kaushal should make a better law minister than any Congress(I) lawyer down the lane."

At 66, and put by her own work-style into an imperial seclusion, Mrs Gandhi can in no way build bridges anew with the party. Not that she is surrounded by building materials. Repeated party splits have denuded its ranks of recognisable talent, and though the southern debacle compelled her to make a show of new beginnings, in substance she has little elbow room. Not unless she reaches out beyond the confines of her loyalists—which could provoke a reaction from those who have stood by her in her worst times.

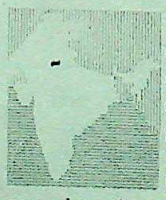
There is no dearth of such people in the country within reach, if she chooses to use them. Men like K.C. Pant, who has recently rejoined the Congress(I), made his mark as an efficient minister. Y.B. Chavan is still mentally agile, has the longest administrative experience but is stagnating in an inconsequential Finance Commission. Vidya Charan Shukla, rotting in limbo since his dismissal from the Cabinet in 1980, is a potential asset to her for his influence and persuasive skill.

But these are the men whom Mrs Gandhi dreads most now, because their existence in the arena raise doubts about Rajiv's choice as successor to her. As things are, she prefers to have Rajiv tower above an army of faceless nonentities, exemplified by the Buta Singhs and the V.P. Singhs and has awarded him high party office in spite of his inability to make much of a mark on the party and lack of any commendable qualification other than being his mother's son. In the process, the more she changes the party, the more it remains the same.

—SUMIT MITRA

DELHI ELECTION

Breathing Space



MRS GANDHI breathes again. On January 6, as the results of the prestigious elections to the Delhi Metropolitan Council and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi started trickling in, it was clear that the Congress(I), fighting with its back to the wall, had won an impressive if token victory. "Atal Behari *atak gaya kamal ka phool latak gaya* (Atal Behari has got stuck and the lotus has wilted)," yelled jubilant Congress(I) workers as their party smashed into traditional opposition strongholds to take 34 of the 56 council seats and 57 of the 100 corporation seats. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a favourite in what was considered its citadel, came through a gloomy week-end to win 19 council and 38 corporation seats, its alliance partner Lok Dal(C) bagging two and three respectively.

Ruling party candidates themselves were stunned by the extent of their win. The normally phlegmatic H.K.L. Bhagat, president of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee(I), observed excitedly: "The myth has been exploded that Delhi is the stronghold of the BJP." Bhagat pointed out that the opposition had repeatedly stressed that this was the test case which—after the Congress(I) victory in the south—would show which way the 'wind' was blowing. "Now the whole world knows," he exulted. BJP President A.B. Vajpayee, after resigning from his present post, admitted: "Perhaps we were too confident and complacent."

Humbling Defeats: As BJP leaders felt the wind of the reversals, the atmosphere at the party's Ashoka Road headquarters became turned funeral. It had been hit hard in many of its citadels, including the

Mrs Gandhi after the Congress(I) victory: timely boost

RAGHU RAI

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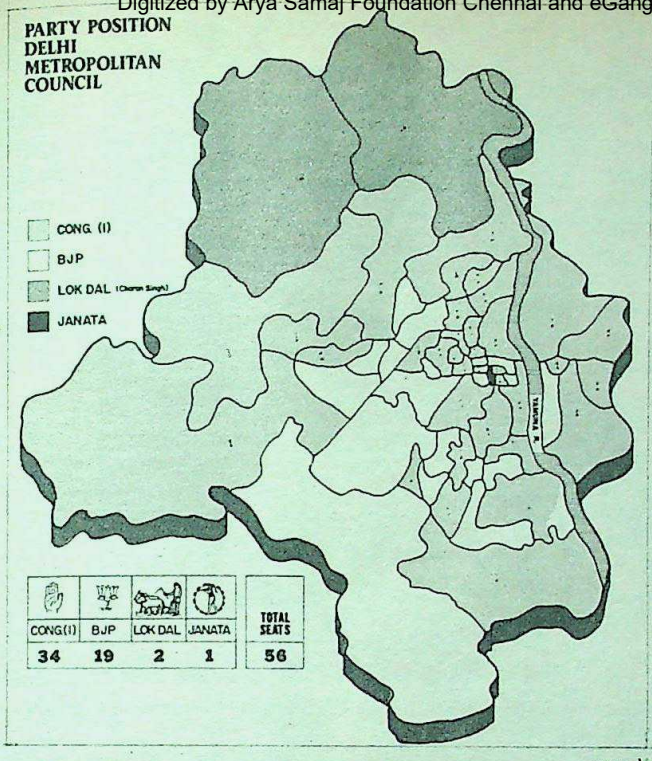
DAY, FEBRUARY

of constituencies dominated
ers, once the mainstay of the
e Jan Sangh. Former execu-
uncillor Rajesh Sharma, one
rongest BJP candidates, lost
former Ashok Jain of the
s(I) in Kucha Patiram.
Charan Gupta, who has
st an election in 32 years, was
d in Deputy Ganj. Kedar
Sadhdeva lost his predomi-
middle class constituency of
Nagar to Arjun Dass, the
ay Gandhi's crony.

e final humiliation for V.K.
a, president of the Delhi BJP
campaign chief, was that the
Patel Nagar corporation seat,
ed his pocket borough, went
Congress(I). In the New Delhi
entary constituency, repre-
e Vajpayee, five of the eight
segments went to the Con-
provoking Bhagat and
s(I) General Secretary C.M.
to demand Vajpayee's resig-



nation from the Lok Sabha in view of the BJP leader's earlier demand that Mrs Gandhi resign the Medak parliamentary seat after her defeat in Andhra Pradesh. The same night, however, Bhagat withdrew his challenge at a hastily organised press conference.

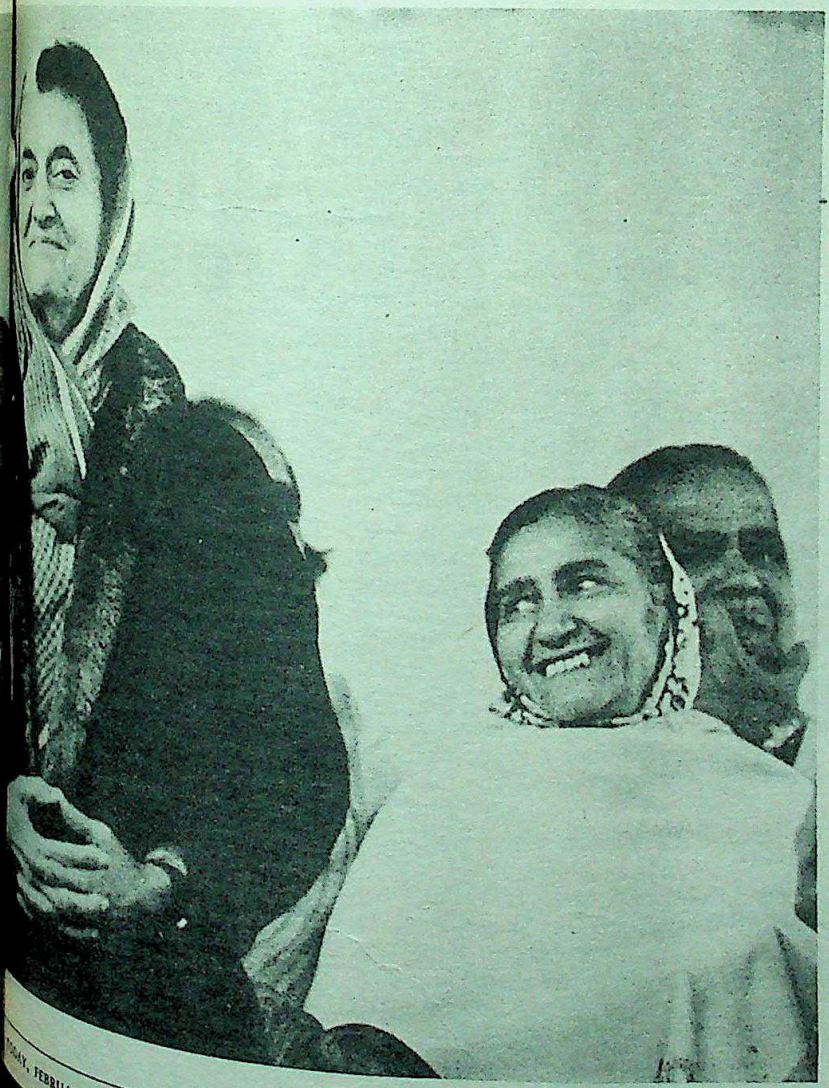
Vote Banks: The Congress(I) retained its hold over Sikhs and Harijans. The Sikh voter turn-out was probably higher than the city's average, despite the Akali Dal's boycott call. The community reportedly voted overwhelmingly for the Congress(I) as did the poorer sections in the resettlement colonies where the BJP lost heavily. But the Muslims turned away from the Congress(I) despite a last minute appeal by the Imam of Jama Masjid and campaigning by Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah.

In fact, most Muslims favoured opposition parties. Said Begum Khurshida Kidwai, a victorious BJP candidate from Matia Mahal: "Not a single Congress(I) candidate has been returned from areas with a high proportion of Muslims such as Ballimaran, Farash Khana, Matia Mahal and Bara Hindu Rao." The only Muslim to win on a Congress(I) ticket was Tajdar Babbar from a New Delhi constituency with a very small proportion of Muslims. On the other hand, the BJP has two Muslim councillors and the Janata Party's only representative in the council is a Muslim.

The Muslims figured in an unfortunate footnote to the election: in the resettlement colony of Jehangirpuri two children died when several houses of the minority community were set on fire. According to reports, there had been considerable tension in the area ever since some 93 Muslim families had refused to accept bedsheets and other gifts from Congress(I) workers.

The Janata Party, for its part, took a severe hammering, winning only one seat each in the council and the corporation. Its candidates lost their deposits in most constituencies, keeping their heads above water only in the walled city, mainly because of the Muslim vote. The Democratic Progressive Front (DPF), a hotch-potch amalgamation of the Lok Dal(K), the Democratic Socialist Party, the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India-Marxist, Congress(J) and the Congress(S), drew humiliating blanks in both bodies.

Despite the Congress(I)'s comfortable win in the prestige election, an analysis of the popular vote reveals that the difference between the ruling party and the BJP is slender. In the 50 council seats that the BJP contested,



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the difference between its vote and the Congress(I)'s was less than 2 per cent. Arun Jaitley, the BJP campaign coordinator points out that the party lost seven seats by less than 300 votes and an eighth by 480 votes. According to Malhotra, low polling worked against the party. Says he: "It was basically the BJP against everybody else. The Janata and the democratic front were also keen for the Congress(I) to win."

But the slender margins prove that if the BJP's organisation had been more effective the story might have been different. Conceded Vajpayee: "Organisational weaknesses came to the fore, especially on polling day. There was no wave for the ruling party. It must be probed how this wide support could not be mobilised." The BJP's strong point was always the dedicated party worker—whether from the youth wing or the Rashtriya Swyamsewak Sangh (RSS). This time they were thin on the ground. Observed a resident of West Nizamuddin: "The Congress(I) workers made five visits to my house. The BJP workers never came, not even to supply me with my serial numbers. In previous elections it has been the other way round."

The party won handily in places where its workers had gone out to get the vote, as in Moti Nagar where former executive councillor Madan Lal Khurana won by 7,600 votes, and in Ashok Nagar and Mehrauli, where victory margins were over 6,000. Such exceptions only prove the rule of a fumbling set-up. Pressmen who approached the party office for election material found that the usually efficient organisation was sluggish.

United Party: In contrast, the Congress(I) rose splendidly to the occasion. Heeding the high command's warning, all warring factions came together. Bhagat estimates that one lakh workers participated in the campaign, "all unpaid", and the party also won the poster war hands down. Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv smiled down from almost every wall and hoardings shouted the battle cry: "Let's continue to build India's proud capital." The BJP brought out a shabby black poster of a lotus with an unmemorable slogan. "As far as the poster war was concerned it was as if the BJP had fled the field," remarked Anu Khanna, a south Delhi resident.

The BJP obviously felt its trump card was Vajpayee who was heard enthusiastically in most areas, although Bhagat sniffs that he "wasted his time on jugglery and jokes". Mrs Gandhi devoted three days to the campaign, addressing nine meetings, drawing encouraging though by no means overwhelming response. She openly attacked Vajpayee by name—accusing him of stating that there would be bloodshed if the Congress(I) returned to power—launched into a tirade

Chandra (right) with Lt-Governor Jagmohan

against the "communalism" of the RSS and the BJP, and called the party anti-women, snatching at a stray remark by Malhotra. The Congress(I) campaign was mostly run by old-timers while the young brains trust watched from the sideline. Rajiv did a reported 60 km by jeep and on foot in his padayatra: this personalised form of campaigning seemed to suit him far better than public meetings.

As a result, the BJP leaders were forced on the defensive in the closing stages and so failed to project issues. Constant harping on the Congress(I) catastrophe in the south probably hurt them more than it helped. Said Lakshmi, a resident of Arjun Nagar: "We are all going to vote for Mrs Gandhi in our colony. After what they have done to her in the south it is up to the north to strengthen her hands." Said Jeewan Singh, a taxi-driver: "As it is, this government hardly functions at all. With Mrs Gandhi further weakened how will things run?"

Smooth Election: With uncharacteristic swiftness, even before the last few results were out, Jag Pravesh Chandra, one of the most senior Congress(I) leaders, and a former deputy chairman of the council, was elected leader of the Congress(I) in the council. This was a personal triumph for Bhagat. He first had a resolution passed which said that only elected councillors would be eligible for the post—effectively excluding Delhi MP's such as Dharam Das Shastri from the race. Ram Lal, a former leader of the party in the corporation had hoped for the post himself but was persuaded to second Chandra's candidature, which was forwarded by Arjun Dass. Chandra was ultimately elected unanimously after party observer Bhag[illegible] Azad spoke to each council member.

Chandra's elevation to the top p[illegible] a surprise, as he is basically a back[illegible] figure and has never occupied centre-[illegible] Said the new chief executive counc[illegible] would be presumptuous on my part [illegible] whether I should have got the post [illegible] earlier. I have never represented the [illegible] Delhi constituency in Parliament. [illegible] been the campaign manager for every [illegible] didate for the seat since 1957."

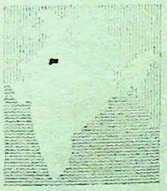
Veteran Leader: Chandra is a [illegible] hian and a bachelor, has written 49 b[illegible] and has been a fixture in Delhi politics [illegible] the '50s when he was first elected to the [illegible] State Legislative Assembly. Khush[illegible] Singh once observed in *The Hin[illegible] Times*: "If you don't know Jag you [illegible] know Delhi; he is the bridegroom at [illegible] wedding and the bereaved at every fu[illegible]

The new leader pledged that [illegible] administration would go to the people [illegible] added: "It is the little things like [illegible] sewers and lighting that we will pay atten[illegible] to." As the euphoria of victory died [illegible] the mundane matters of life were take[illegible] place—and at 1 Safdarjung Road, the [illegible] tive sigh of relief still echoed from the [illegible]

—COOMI K[illegible]

BJP

At The Crossroads



TWO UNRELATED [illegible] ts occurred in Delhi on [illegible] ruary 8, and both, in [illegible] own way, were sig[illegible] pointers to the state [illegible] Bharatiya Janata P[illegible] (BJP). At 4 a.m. that day [illegible] Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) [illegible] lightning call for a special organisa[illegible] meeting from its Jhandewalan [illegible] quarters—an occasional exercise th[illegible] sangh carries out to test its members [illegible] recent Delhi elections did not, h[illegible] figure on the agenda. That same afte[illegible] A.B. Vajpayee resigned from his post [illegible] sident of the party's national executive.

His abrupt move came as a shock [illegible] party leadership. Said K.R. Malkani [illegible] of the weekly *Organiser*, and one [illegible] party's ideologues: "It was a bomb[illegible] most of us. The general feeling is th[illegible] payee over-reacted. Winning and los[illegible] tions is part of the game." Vajpayee [illegible] ever, insisted that "someone sho[illegible] accountable" for the Delhi debac[illegible] being at the helm he had assumed resp[illegible] lity. Considered the BJP's stronghold [illegible]

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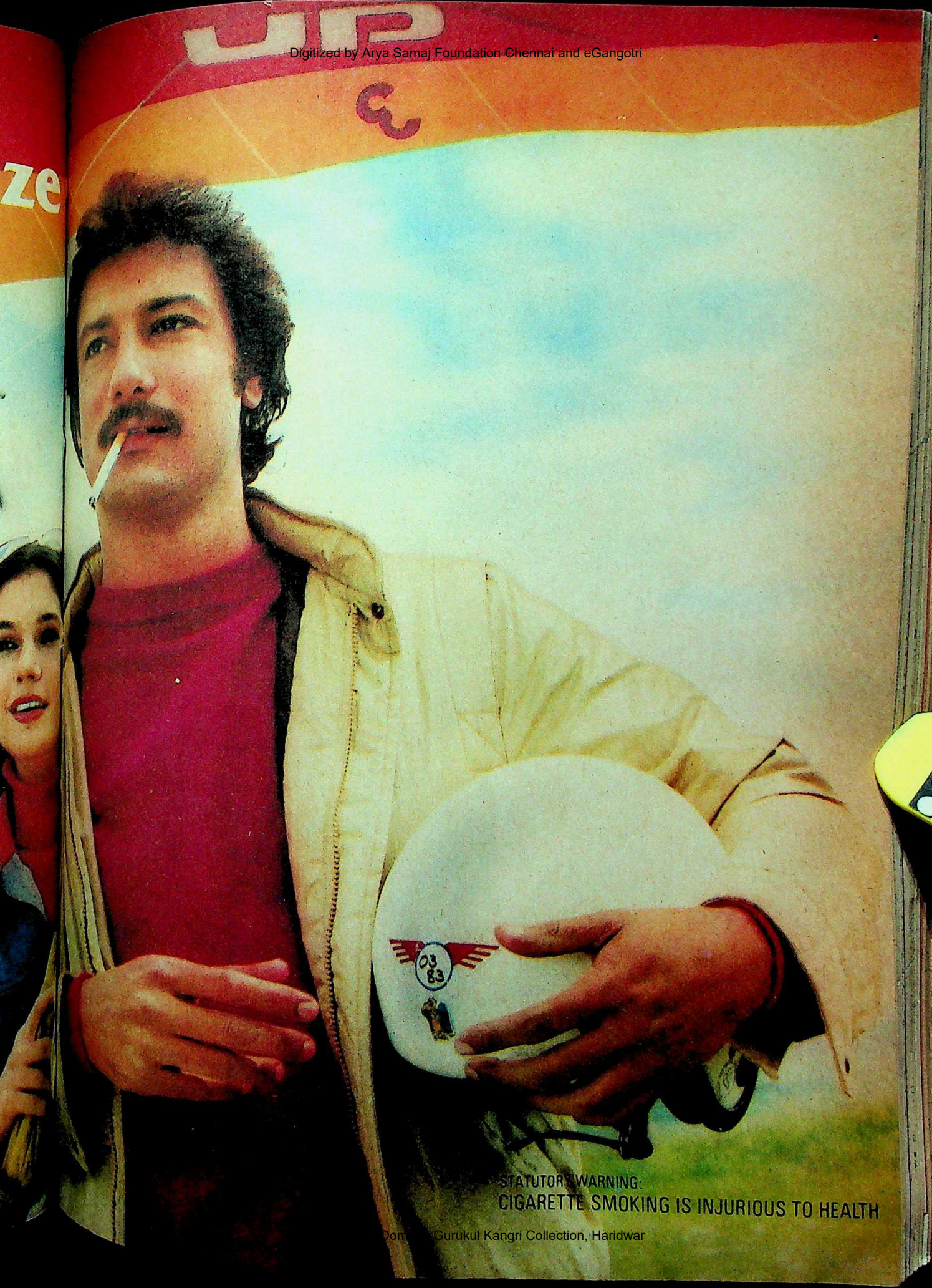

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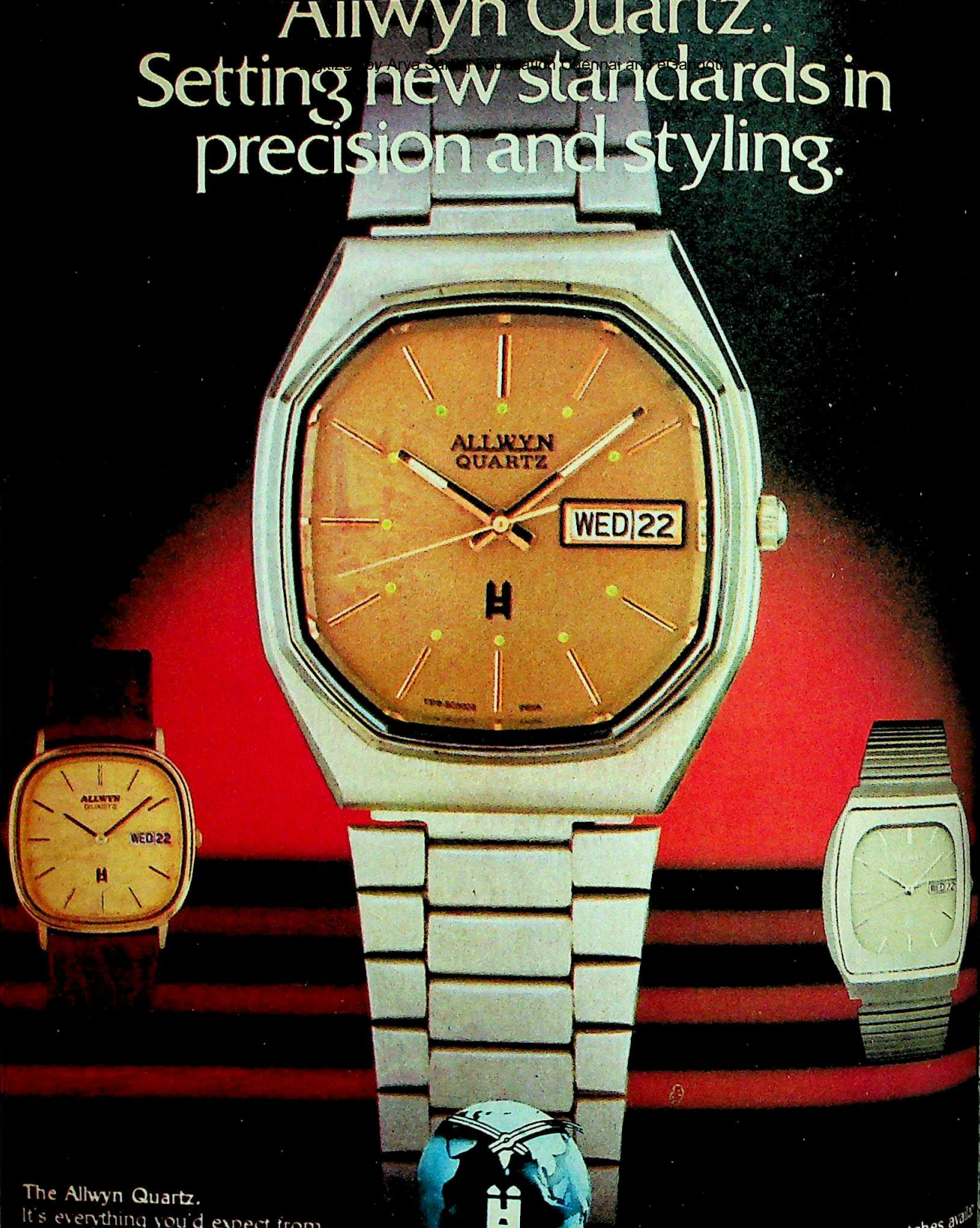

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no ordinary election. Indeed the had stressed that the results would vote for or against the Government. Vajpayee: "It must be probed wide public support, we could better. Organisational weaknesses the fore during the campaign, es- the polling day."

other party leaders such as K.N. J.P. Mathur were reluctant to con- the elections had highlighted this BJP General Secretary L.K. admitted: "There was something with our organisation. We anxious of it in the last 10 days and about a tightening." He agreed biggest strength in the days of the Jan Sangh had been dedicated workers. Said he: "In the old days, the door campaign was our forte," and the breakdown in the party orga- was not a local phenomenon.

Handicap: What BJP leaders do

Vajpayee with other BJP leaders at the convention: taking stock

publicly, is that not having RSS work for the party is a big disad- In Delhi, for the first time, the RSS distance from all but a few stringent were its instructions, that activists who had earlier held elected unwilling to participate. Creating embarrassment for local party Sardari Lal Gupta, a hard core of the RSS who had won the Kamla corporation seat in 1977, declined to on a political platform. Malkani, insisted that this was hardly since the "RSS has been telling the the last 30 years to stand on its own BJP has its own cadre and does not RSS".

nevertheless, in Delhi at any rate, the brought cracks in the party or- to the fore. Reflected Advani: "In phase, the workers of the organi- became more and more dependent on political climate rather than on organisational efficiency as used to be the case earlier. Perhaps it will take time to break the habit." He emphasised: "We are now a mass-based party with a cadre-based nucleus."

This, however, aptly sums up the dilemma of the two-year-old party, which emerged from the Janata in 1980 but has remained an offshoot of the old Jan Sangh. The BJP is at the crossroads, and Vajpayee's resignation and the Delhi election results merely highlight its traumatic choice. Should it move away from its traditional moorings in its search for a wider base and in the process lose some of its hard core support? A significant pattern has emerged in the Delhi poll, where the BJP lost the support of the Hindu trading classes who were once the backbone of the Jan Sangh and made an unprecedented improvement in its performance amongst Muslim voters. Indeed, the RSS has long been upset over the BJP's role in protecting Hindu interests. The most recent irritant is the BJP's support of the Hindus in Punjab, which the RSS leadership feels is not strong enough.

Party Reorganisation: The RSS's withdrawal threat has underscored the BJP's need to strengthen its own organisation. Rajinder Puri, a moderate member of the party's national executive desires drastic changes in the set-up. Said he: "The basic principle of organisation is the dispersal of authority and accountability. But here, there is a tendency to treat everything like a family gathering, so that accountability is not pinpointed and responsibility is defused." A growing section of the party, particularly the youth most of whom are Vajpayee supporters, feel that the leadership is stalling attempts at change. A party member cited as an example, the setting up of *ekta* clubs for the labour and the underprivileged—a year-old decision of the national executive which has been resisted by the Delhi leadership.

The BJP has always prided itself on its stock, which is distinct from that of all opposition parties other than the communists, which are basically products of Congress culture. Its stock, on the other hand, is that of the RSS and its current membership of 38 lakh, compared to the three lakh that the Jan Sangh at its height enjoyed, has injected fears in the old guard that the Congress culture is creeping in here too and the discipline eroding. Malkani for one, feels that the BJP, like the Jan Sangh, needs some kind of moral authority to keep its members in check.

The intra-party tug of war between the moderates and the hard-liners, who are closer to the RSS, has been going on for years. No decision has ever been reached about the role of their star orator, Vajpayee, whose charisma has created his own mass following. While he is indispensable to the party, the hard-liners disapprove of his growing personality cult which was epitomised by the slogan, *pradhan mantri agli bari, Atal Behari, Atal Behari* (prime minister next time, Atal Behari), which cropped up after the 1981 Bombay convention. "Vajpayee will always have his own position in the party but no party can afford to be a one-man-show," says Malkani, adding that "there are other leaders in our party". In fact, however, the growing local influence of regional BJP leaders such as Bhairon Singh Shekhawat in Rajasthan, Jagdambi Prasad Yadav in Bihar and O. Rajagopal in Uttar Pradesh is seen as a threat to party discipline.

RUMBLINGS in the normally tight-lipped and disciplined party are increasingly articulating dissatisfaction in the ranks over the manner in which the central leadership has generally selected hard-liners to look after various regions during elections. True to convention, the biennial elections to the state-level committees, held in October and November last year, were authoritarian, with the consensus method prevailing over the voting system. Not surprisingly, therefore, known hard-liner Sunder Singh Bhandari got Madhav Prasad Tripathi appointed president of the Uttar Pradesh unit, bypassing Kalyan Singh, former food minister in the Janata government, who enjoyed more support.

To what extent Vajpayee has succeeded in shaking the old guard will be clear only after the meeting of the national executive in Jaipur and the next party convention due in another two months when the new party president will be selected. Significantly, even after Vajpayee's resignation, Delhi BJP President V.K. Malhotra, who along with K.N. Sahni and M.L. Khurana is accused of running an exclusive three-man show in Delhi for years, had not thought it fit to resign. Instead, in an ambiguous statement he asked the party high command to "decide

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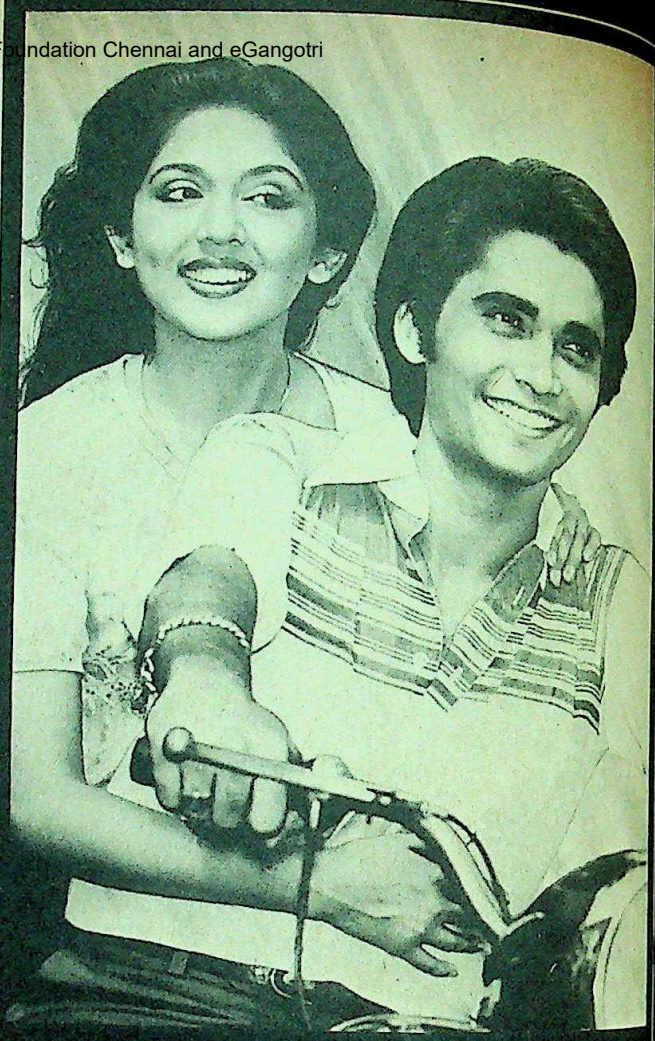

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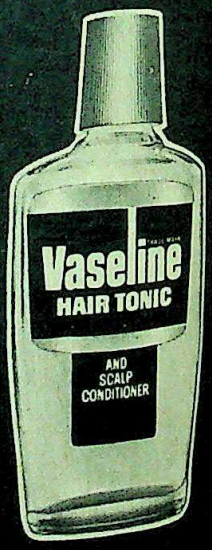

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...up at the organisational level".

...the future shape of the party, much ...on events in the next two months. ...scores of telegrams and appeals to ...his resignation, Vajpayee told ...that even if the working com- ...was to ask him to relent "I will say I ...". However, Mathur, a member of ...executive and party whip in the ...felt that his resignation would ...acceptable to a single member of the ...committee.

...esting Choice: If Vajpayee's re- ...survives the test, an interesting ...will be who of the three party ...dents is chosen as acting president ...two months which remain before the ...convention. Vajpayee's obvious ...is senior-most vice-president Ram ...a liberal who is completely un- ...able to the RSS. Others in the party ...disagree that the remaining two ...dents, Sunder Singh Bhandari and ...Raje Scindia, are in any way junior to ...Said Mathur firmly: "There is ...or junior vice-president in our ...Interestingly, Jethmalani has expres- ...intention to emulate Vajpayee's ...However, last fortnight, with Vaj- ...Likely to support this move, it was ...whether he had actually tendered ...ation.

...party has also to resolve its ambi- ...stand on alliances, adjustments and ...While on its Delhi home ground it ...for an alliance with the Lok Dal(C), it ...way from alliances with other parties ...Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka. ...Pradesh, Vajpayee was offered 25 ...N.T. Rama Rao in a proposed ...but, much to his consternation, this ...acceptable to the cadres who quibbled ...the selection of constituencies.

...a hopeful Vajpayee: "The Delhi ...and my resignation will serve as a ...party is changing in character, com- ...and colour, and there is no going ...In fact, since 1980, in a significant ...the BJP's electoral performance has ...pressive in states like Maharashtra, ...Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pra- ...Karnataka. In Kerala too, while ...a blank due to polarisation of sides, ...established a sound base. On the other ...in Haryana and Delhi, the party has ...had reversals. Even so, Malkani ...Our base in Delhi remains intact."

...ertheless, both Vajpayee and ...deny that the BJP is currently projec- ...as the only alternative to the Cong- ...Said Vajpayee, "There is no single ...to the Congress(I) in all states at ...ent. All parties are regional in ...But by 1990, we will be the alter-

—COOMI KAPOOR

MAHARASHTRA

A Delicate Balance

IT WAS hailed by ruling partymen as a significant change for the better. Newspaper editorials joyfully acclaimed the belated entry of an able chief minister for Maharashtra; and political pundits welcomed the change in Mrs Gandhi's approach to state politics (presumably wrought by the lessons of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka) which prompted her to allow the legislators to choose, as chief minister of Maharashtra, strongman Vasantrao Dada Patil. But by

CHANDI VIRAPPE

Patil: compromise candidate

swearing-in time a week later on February 7, when Patil's council of ministers took the oath of office, the euphoria was already wearing thin.

Clearly determined to maintain her own brand of control on the country's premier state, Congress(I) leader Indira Gandhi had seen to it that Patil would have a seriously abridged hold on the Government he heads: in appointing Ramrao Adik deputy chief minister and planting at least a dozen of his supporters in the new ministry—against only nine followers of Patil himself—she has created a delicate balance of power in Maharashtra to ensure that the chief minister does not step out of line.

Crowed Congress(S) President Sharad Pawar, whose party has in the last few months emerged as a serious threat to the Congress(I) stronghold in Maharashtra: "In creating dual centres of power Mrs Gandhi has played a risky game, and one which is bound to backfire eventually. She has obviously learned nothing from the election debacle in the south, since Dada will never be able to exercise the sort of control which is needed with the vertical division of power in his ministry."

Manoeuvring: The installation of the new chief minister was engineered with all the skill and dexterity she has displayed repeatedly in the past. After a visit by Congress(I) Central Parliamentary Board (CPB) observers Shiv Shankar and Buta Singh last January had laid the groundwork for a change (INDIA TODAY, February 15), word was passed down that Mrs Gandhi would this time leave the choice of a chief minister entirely to the legislators. Almost simultaneously, Dada Patil, a member of Parliament who for the past two years has served as general secretary of the party in Delhi, was informally relieved of his duties shortly after being put squarely in the running for the chief minister's post.

The Congress(I) Legislature Party (CLP) election on January 31 was brilliantly stage-managed to arrive at the desired result. By mid-morning, emissaries of the party high command had begun spreading the word that Mrs Gandhi frowned on ex-chief minister A.R. Antulay's candidature, and it was only moments before the actual election process that evening that the central observers made a formal statement to that effect. With the wily ex-chief minister effectively sidetracked, only two serious contenders remained: Vasantrao Dada Patil and Ramrao Adik. The result—since many of the votes intended for Antulay were diverted to Adik—was a close tie between the two, giving Mrs Gandhi the justification for forming a compromise ministry.

Ominous Portents: If his first fortnight in power is any indication, Patil will face serious problems from within his own ministry. By mid-fortnight Adik sympathisers were tentatively flexing their muscles: two ministers assigned from the Jambuvantrao Dhote group of Vidarbha refused to take the oath. The grouse: their faction was under-represented since only (sic) two ministers were nominated from the faction of 12 legislators. Though this was only a transparent ploy for increasing Adik's backing in the ministry, the group was in fact jockeying for the inclusion in the team of Dhote's wife Vijaya, who is Adik's daughter.

By end-fortnight, however, outward

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NTRAO PATIL

aking Charge

HE SHOWS no signs, apart from the ional, hacking bouts of coughing, of health which has plagued him for the ce years. Revitalised and aglow the thrill of victory, Vasantrao Dada 65, bustled to and from the mber attached to the chief r's airy office on the sixth floor of y's Mantralaya. The passage ke was crammed with visitors holding ds and small bouquets of flowers, ns, businessmen and officials ing the first courtesy calls before the ual business of governance begins. labour officials briefed the new minister on the textile strike; a colleague came in to ask his help problem; and a handful of favour- like proverbial early birds, ed on Patil with little slips of paper their problems. Taking time off an obviously rushed schedule, and his already late lunch of raw les (he has recently returned from a farm which laid down a strict diet), Patil leaned his slight frame in the large, official chair and to INDIA TODAY *Correspondent* GER UDAY SINGH *in a curiously nate tone about the problems him and expressed his confidence will solve them all. Excerpts:*

Q. *Before your council of ministers take the oath, talk of dissidence had begun. How do you propose to this?*

A. There is no major problem of ence. This is only the dissatisfied ing of a few people who will be dissatisfied no matter what is But it is not my problem. I am only ned that people must not feel that ernment is not working, and this I make sure of.

Q. *Is Antulay a threat to your office?*

A. I don't think he will oppose me at until the election took place, it was he could oppose me. But now I think he will, and even then I will his cooperation.

Q. *Is it true that you will try to isolate*

A. No, no! As long as he is an MLA in party I will ask for his cooperation support.

Q. *Your statement that you will ask to return to the sugar cooperatives the which they donated to the Indira Pratibha Pratishthan* (IGPP) ents this...

A. These are internal matters, they are not of consequence. The thing is that the cooperatives felt that this was a government trust, because this is what they were told. Even the cheque which my cooperative factory sent to the Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratishthan... only after sending it we were told that it had been credited to the Pratibha Pratishthan and not the IGPP; so we thought that there is something funny. But the Governor's speech and finance minister's budget address suggested that it was a government trust so we kept quiet. Now we are just saying that since the money was taken under false pretences, it should either be spent in our area or it should be returned to the cooperatives. I am a man who believes in compromise, so I want that it should be returned without problem. Otherwise the cooperatives will have to go to the courts before it gets time-barred.

Q. *Your party is in a shambles and corruption is rampant. How will you avoid*

I will see to it that at every level we function in such a way that we will prove to the people that we can do their work without taking any money.

a repeat of the Andhra and Karnataka experience here?

A. These charges are made against all governments. Our aim is only that we should be above corruption so that no one can point a finger. I will see to it that at every level we function in such a way that we will prove to the people that we can do their work without taking any money. One major task for me will be to keep all sections of the party workers motivated, and in my confidence, and I will try to take the Opposition also into confidence. Andhra and Karnataka will not be repeated, and that's why I'm here.

Q. *Will you compromise with Datta Samant to find a solution to the textile strike?*

A. There is no possibility of a compromise till the Tripartite Committee publishes its report, because everything depends on what that committee recommends. But if he wants to meet me, I am certainly willing to meet him and talk to him, just as I will meet the RMMS leaders, workers and everyone else concerned.

calm was restored when Dhote relented and allowed his followers to take the oath without wresting any special concessions. But the point had been made: four years ago Patil led a similarly insecure ministry with Nasikrao Tirpude as deputy chief minister; and since that government was easily toppled by insider Sharad Pawar, this one could be too.

Patil's problems extend to control of the legislature party also. No sooner was the composition of his ministry announced than the first rumblings of discontent set in. Apart from the Dhote faction which refused to attend the investiture ceremony in a bid to enforce its claim, the swearing-in of new ministers was boycotted by two groups of legislators led by Premalatai Chavan and A.R. Antulay. Even as the Patil team was sworn in at the picturesque Raj Bhavan, Chavan held a meeting of roughly 30 disgruntled legislators and ex-ministers to protest against the complete exclusion of her followers.

Said Baburao Kale, a Chavan supporter who served brief terms in both Antulay's and Bhosale's cabinets: "Dada and Ramrao have formed a team which, apart from the fact that the majority of ministers are inexperienced or even incompetent, is only composed of people from their own groups. Premalatai Chavan's group which can muster the support of over 50 MLA's has been totally ignored, as have the supporters of Babasaheb Bhosale, which suggests that he does not want our cooperation at all."

Nuisance: More importantly, the threat from Antulay remains alive, even after his rout in the CLP election. Prime mover in Maharashtra's dissident politics, the notorious ex-chief minister continues to retain both the backing and the audacity which give him his nuisance value. For the record, Antulay insists that he will not at this stage make any efforts to destabilise the Patil Government, adding somewhat ambiguously that he wishes "Dada" well. But his scarcely-veiled threats to the party high command suggest a different intention.

Within minutes of being informed telephonically that he had come a poor third in the ballot for chief ministership, Antulay dashed off a strongly-worded telegram to the high command threatening dire consequences. Address to Congress(I) Working President Kamalapati Tripathi, the detailed telegram (which cost Rs 141) warned that "Maharashtra will have, not another Karnataka, but another Andhra" if note were not taken of his protest at the conduct of the election.

Throwing all caution to the winds in the days which followed his abortive attempt at the chief ministership, Antulay launched a

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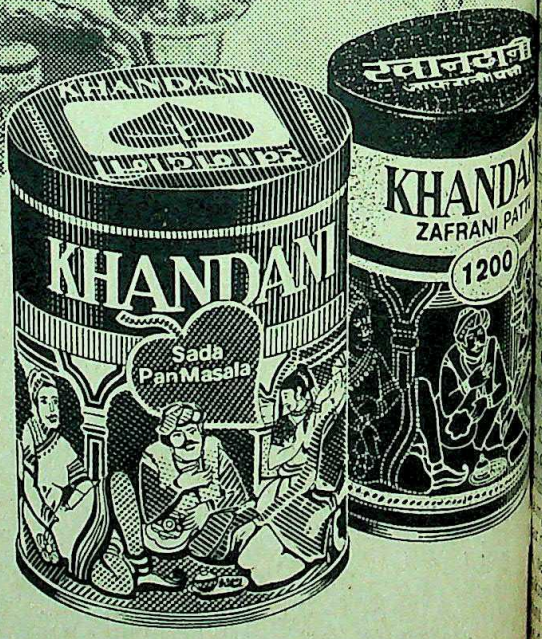

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ANTULAY

eiled Threats

ON THE eve of his 54th birthday Antulay had lost none of his customa- ger and bluster. "Betrayed" by his command, exposed as a leader with an opportunistic following, and de- by some of his closest followers he ess retains the confident air of the world on his palm. Between with his followers Antulay de- his conduct at the Congress(I) Party CLP(I) meeting and held threats for the future in an with INDIA TODAY, Excerpts:

Q. Your public statements and press ence suggest that you are on a conf- course with the Congress(I) high mand. Is this true?

A. When you put this question you me, or presuppose that there is no logue allowed and whenever some is spoken it is called a confronta- It is not so...I have objected to the which the election was conducted. the CLP(I) meeting I thought that procedure proposed by me and adop- the meeting would be carried out. Instead the observers went and held a conference and said that Mr Antu- not allowed to contest.

Q. But they had conveyed the high mand's decision to you.

A. They conveyed to me at 2.30 in afternoon so you can say that they yed just at the time of the meeting. know if they had conveyed this thing hour earlier in the MLA hostel it have been a different thing.

Q. Would you have withdrawn your dature then?

A. If they had discreetly informed me not told the press as if there is some tification attached to me, which I never agree. I would have given a ring Pandit Kamalapati Tripathi myself. such a nice leader. When Madam also can talk to me, why should convey through these observers who known to have animus against me?

Q. Do you blame the high command ying to suppress you politically?

A. No. Again high command means Congress Parliamentary Board, not Gandhi alone. So I do say that well, people in Delhi have not been kindly to me. For example, for a more even the treasurer and gene- secretary of the AICC(I) have been making statements against me so the is not what Mrs Gandhi has or has The point is how much is being sold in the name of Mrs Gandhi and the working president by those who claim to represent them.

Q. ***You say that 175 MLA's were backing you on the day of the election. Yet your closest supporters are deserting you.***

A. One minute. How many times during the past one year have there been such rumours? But let the time come; I will again hurl the challenge. What was that which was not done then to isolate me? And every time the press wrote that there are hardly five to 10 MLA's with me, or 15 MLA's are with me. But when I challenged and said secret ballot who shied away? If they really thought I didn't have more than 15 MLA's it would have been an ideal situation for them to expose me. To show the world—look here is a man who is making a tall claim. I did not shy away. I wanted to vindicate my honour because I am not a criminal.

Q. ***When you say you will hurl the challenge again, do you mean with the Vasantdada Government?***

A. It means nothing except what the words convey. That, should an opportunity arise I am again going to say let there be a secret ballot.

Q. ***And you are still confident that you would have the necessary support?***

A. No fool will do so unless he has that confidence.

Q. ***A year ago you resigned the chief ministership of Maharashtra in order to respect the Bombay High Court's decision, which has since been upheld. What makes you fight for that same post today?***

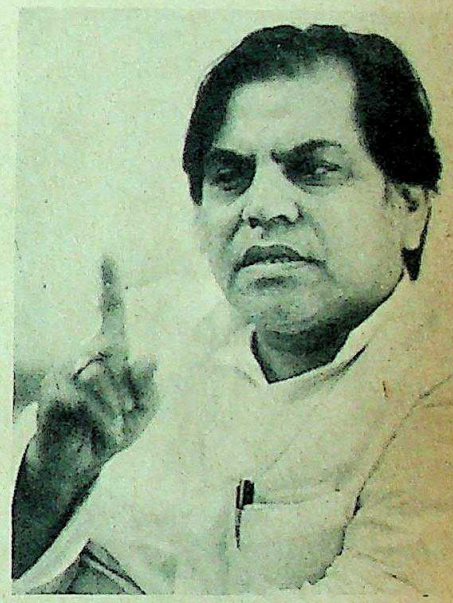
A. I wanted to vindicate my honour. I did not step down because I did something wrong. Yet in a democratic system there is something called the judiciary and since I have respect for it I stepped down. But now I have to vindicate my honour. You forgot that I had staked my chief ministership and I had won two by-elections on this very point before the judgement came. On this point alone I told the high command that not a single leader from the Centre should come and I alone campaigned saying that this would be a vote of confidence in me on the Pratishthan issue. The popular verdict was in favour. And yet I showed respect to the high court judgement.

Q. ***Will you quit the party now that the high command has shown that it is against you?***

A. I know that the thought of humiliating Mr Antulay will be far from the mind of Mrs Gandhi. And yet the observers did it. I said the other day that I have full faith in Mrs Gandhi's leadership. The moment I lose faith I shall not remain in the party for a moment.

public vilification campaign against the party high command. Stopping just short of attacking Mrs Gandhi, he nevertheless accused the CPB and the observers sent by it of rigging the election against him and committing a "fraud" on the state. Addressing a jam-packed press conference in his Marine Drive flat on February 1 and in a string of exclusive press interviews since, he stated that Shiv Shankar and Buta Singh had been hand-picked because of their known animosity to him; that the pair had pressurised legislators to vote against him; and that he had the unequivocal backing of 175 of the roughly 300 members of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and Council.

Burnt Bridges: Implicit in Antulay's self-glorification campaign was the threat



Antulay: controversial claims

that he is capable (if provoked) of toppling the Patil Government and creating chaos. But the continuing bravado and cocksure proclamations notwithstanding, it was increasingly clear that the wily politician had overplayed his hand. Defiantly confronting the Congress(I) high command, both at the CLP meeting and during its aftermath, Antulay appears to have burnt his bridges with Mrs Gandhi. He had assumed that he would carry the legislators with him regardless of her inclinations. "He thought he could pressurise her into accepting his candidature by a show of strength," said one Congressman, "but nobody has done that yet with Madam and got away with it. I doubt if she will ignore his conduct at the CLP meeting, or his open threats and criticism."

In the days before the CLP meeting which elected a successor to Bhosale, Antulay changed swiftly from discreet lobbying to aggressive rabble-rousing,

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aiming to gain the *gaddi*. Returning to Bombay after visiting Mrs Gandhi in New Delhi on January 29, he promptly announced that she was not averse to his candidature and threw himself into the fray. The next two days saw hectic activity by a hurriedly formed Antulay-Dhote combine, with the ex-chief minister spending hours each day lobbying MLA's, trying to convince them to vote for him. His most trusted lieutenants—including six who were suspended from the Congress(I) for abusing Bhosale at the Nagpur legislative session, and one who was last year expelled from the party—fanned out and persuaded MLA's to meet Antulay and support him. The ex-chief minister used both the telephone and personal meetings to spread word of his candidature.

Reports from within the hall suggest that Antulay's suspended supporters made every effort to disrupt the meeting and bring about a postponement. Bhaurao Patil, in a supreme display of arrogance, shouted at Buta Singh: "You don't teach us about the Congress! You yourself are from the Akali Dal." Antulay having been refused permission to speak at the meeting, nevertheless grabbed the mike to canvass vigorously for himself.

Diminishing Support: But Antulay's openly defiant stance at the CLP meeting and election, and the public harangues with which he responded to his failure, have had a rapid fall-out among his followers. Clearly worried that the Congress(I) high command will retaliate to his charges and threats, Antulay supporters last fortnight started hedging their bets with public statements denouncing their mentor's attitude.

Disclaiming any part in the unpleasantness with the observers, some of his closest lieutenants proclaimed that Antulay had "misled" them about having Mrs Gandhi's support for his candidature, adding that he had overstepped the mark and no longer enjoyed their support. Said Satish Chaturvedi, who on election day numbered among Antulay's closest aides: "Antulay misled us by saying that the high command was supporting him, but when he attacks the high command then we are certainly not with him. It is a lie to say that this election was a fraud. My impression is that 80 per cent of the pro-Antulay legislators now share my view and will not support him."

Others left him as rapidly, once it was certain that he had failed in his attempt to grab the chief ministership. Swarupsingh Naik, a minister in Bhosale's cabinet who was sacked last month for his pro-Antulay activities, gathered a group of Adivasi legislators last fortnight and sharply criticised the ex-chief minister: his reward is a cabinet post in Patil's newly-formed ministry.

SURYAKANTA Patil, Ashok Patil, Suresh Jain and others from Antulay's inner circle have also made statements supporting Patil's Government but this is seen by observers as a mere ruse engineered by the wily politician himself in a bid to gain Patil's confidence. Scoffed Antulay: "Anybody can make statements. Look at all the statements made against Mrs Gandhi between 1977 and 1980; yet those very people now call themselves her most loyal supporters. When the time comes, all these people will come back."

Tragic Legacy: The defections have reduced Antulay's strength in the Maharashtra Legislature, but his nuisance value for the new chief minister will remain high unless the party high command finally takes direct action against him. For Patil, however, the real problems will stem not so much from dissidence as from the widespread rot in both his party and the administration. He has been bequeathed the legacy of a party and administration which are seriously weakened after three successive years of widespread corruption and inefficiency.

Samant (left) and Pawar: posing problems

The party organisation, which has been involved in little besides dissidence and money-grabbing is in a shambles. The administration, debilitated after Antulay's iron rule and Bhosale's *laissez-faire* style of functioning, can do little more than maintain the status quo, and a large section of the legislatures are nine-day wonders which, even after a whole year of relatively benefit-free functioning, have not forgotten the largesse of the Antulay era.

To make matters worse, Patil inherits a state which is fast reaching the crisis stage. The Bombay textile mills strike, entering its fourteenth crippling month and responsible for over 54 million man-days lost, has reached the point where workers are [illegible] returning to work. At this point, [illegible] the Government can do will help [illegible] its image with the state's labour force [illegible] is unlikely that anything but the [illegible] measures will be initiated anyway.

Inept Handling: Already branded [illegible] Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS) because he once headed the INTUC-[illegible] union, Patil added to workers' [illegible] when he announced that one of his [illegible] rities would be to revitalise the [illegible] restore confidence in it. Since one [illegible] major issues at stake in the strike [illegible] recognition of the RMMS as the workers' [illegible] cial bargaining agent, Patil's openly [illegible] stand will win him few votes. "We are [illegible] pecting any change in the Congress [illegible] cies just because the man at the [illegible] changed," said labour leader D[illegible] Samant last fortnight. "He says [illegible] wants to settle the strike and we are [illegible] for the best; but I assure you, we [illegible] expecting any miracles."

A more widespread crisis [illegible] one which will determine [illegible] Patil's Ministry can renew public [illegible] fidence in his party is his handling [illegible] the drought which has struck [illegible] 10 districts in the state for the [illegible] crop season running. Maha[illegible] has a number of programmes [illegible] can be used to generate rural [illegible] in drought-affected zones, but [illegible] mance to date has been dismal [illegible] of the high rate of corruption [illegible] non-implementation. If Patil [illegible] achieve his aim of leading his [illegible] victory at the polls in 1985, [illegible] have to revitalise programmes [illegible] Employment Guarantee Scheme [illegible] ted by Antulay and reactivating [illegible] grammes for supply of drinking [illegible] drought-hit villages.

Threat: Meanwhile, Patil has [illegible] tend not only with the potential for [illegible] lism within his own party, but also [illegible] rising threat from Pawar's Congress [illegible] which has effectively built up a region [illegible] in Maharashtra while the ruling party [illegible] its in-house battles. Conducting a [illegible] constituency-wise tour of the entire [illegible] spread over the past five months, Pawar [illegible] begun a campaign for the next two [illegible] build up his party's grass roots support [illegible]

But Patil scoffs at the threat from [illegible] and without, insisting that he will [illegible] Congress(I) house in order and [illegible] party to victory. "The dissidence in [illegible] now is not even important enough [illegible] my attention," he said, "and as for [illegible] Pawar, how can he hope to be a threat [illegible] He is just an opportunist who says [illegible] to one group and the opposite to the [illegible]

—CHANDER [illegible]

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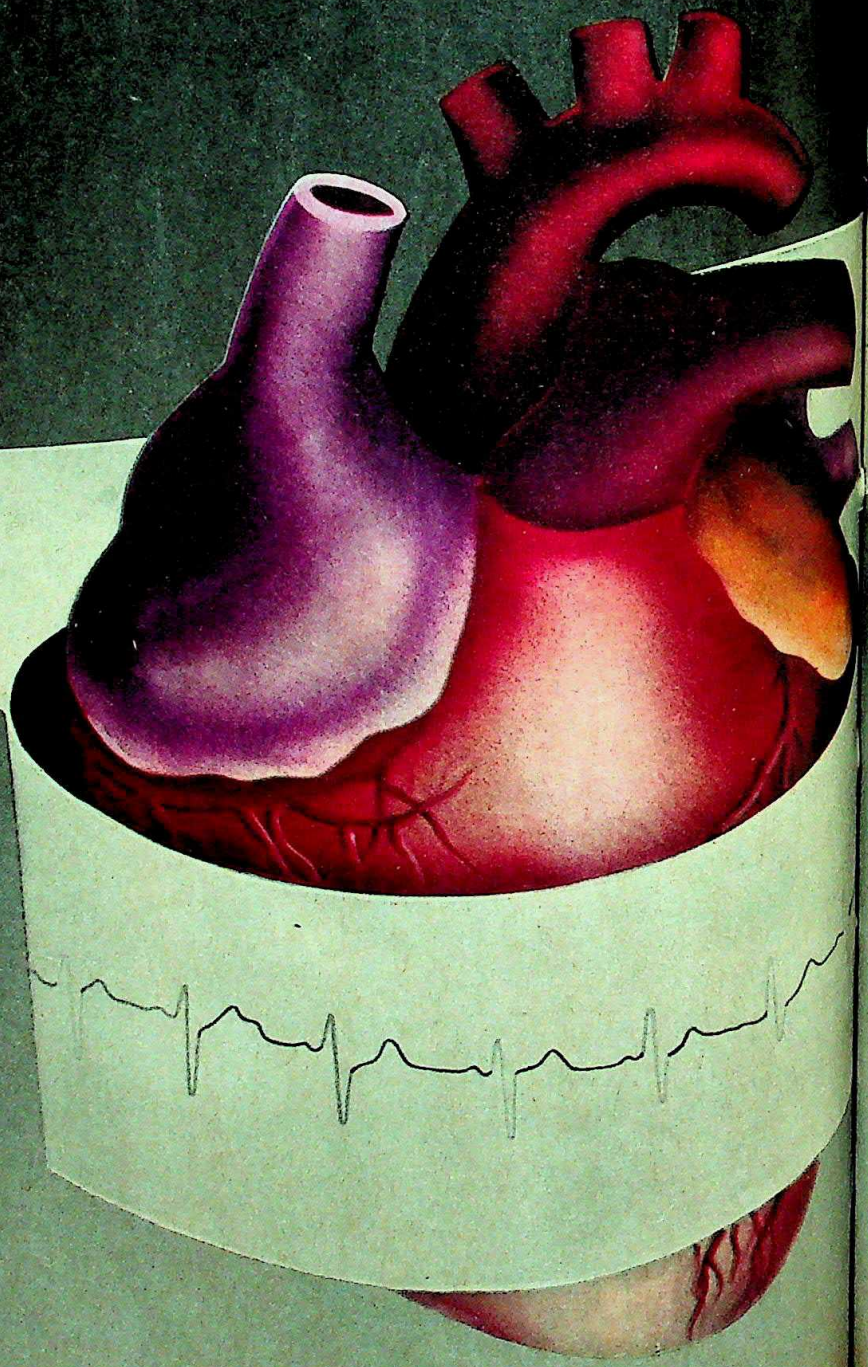

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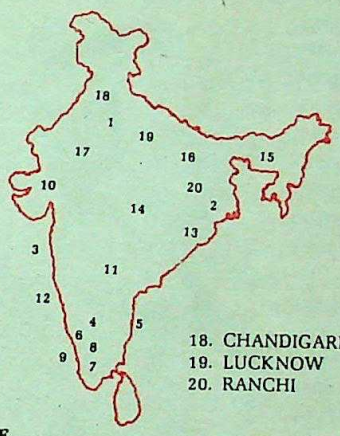

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PILOO MODY

Death Of A Dream

A FEW days before he died in his sleep on the morning of January 29, Piloo Mody, the irrepressibly buoyant MP *who for over a decade brought to Indian politics a special flavour of wit, whacky humour and wisdom, spent a morning with* INDIA TODAY *Correspondent* SUNIL SETHI *explaining his plans to start a new political party. Mody, the 57-year-old architect who had been an* MP *since 1967, first as a pillar of the Swatantra Party, then the Bharatiya Lok Dal, and finally the Janata Party was planning to quit it as soon as he found "an elegant moment". For years, Mody said, he had observed Indian politics degenerate into politics of greed, caste and corruption and had seriously been trying to think of a system that would eliminate "money power, caste power and violence from the kind of politics that have ruined our quality of life". In its place, Mody had formulated plans for a new party to be called Nav Nirman. Excerpts from the encounter:*

BHAWAN SINGH

PILOO Mody wasn't joking that morning. For the many who had come to regard his Falstaffian girth and good humour as his most memorable aspects, Mody was also a deeply concerned, spirited and scrupulous thinker. Behind the rapier-like wit and the unflinching ability to call a spade a spade, was a mind that contributed considerably more than glittering newspaper copy. Often idealistic and sometimes haphazard in his political thinking, Mody never lost sight of basic political issues: his honesty permitted him to spare no one, including himself. "I have many admirers in this country but no followers," he said, "and you know why: because you can only acquire political followers these days by plundering money at the cost of the people."

In recent years his disillusionment with the political system appeared all-pervasive. "You accept that politics means the pursuit of power, and that the name of the game is getting votes. But in every society people exercise certain restraints in pursuit of those votes. In India, there are no holds barred. Whether we work out a five-year plan or cause a communal riot, the purpose is only to collect votes. The only Indian activity excluded from this pursuit seems to be rape."

Mody's plans for a new political party emerged from some of these assumptions about a steadily deteriorating political morality. It singled him out as a maverick within the Janata Party: since 1977 when he formulated a "ginger group" inside the party, his disenchantment with politics in general had grown. But he was not one to turn his back on his accepted vocation of politics; nor did he permit his disenchantment to descend into outright cynicism. For the last two years he had been trying to establish the working of a national political alternative. "If you assume that there are no more than 20,000 professional politicians—in Parliament and in the legislatures—and, say, another 30,000 criminals, gangsters, smugglers and corrupted types feeding upon politicians, does that mean that altogether there are 50,000 people holding a country of nearly 700 million to ransom? And if that is true, then it is to be also supposed that you cannot find 50,000 people in this country—simple, straight, honest-to-goodness, hard-working—to run it. I refuse to believe that there no more honest people left."

HARI OM GULATI

The President pays his last respects; Mody (top) outside Parliament: irreplaceable loss

Credible Alternative: Mody had genuinely to believe that he could be cadre of dedicated people committed basic principles of honesty, scrupulo and public accountability. Back when the idea first struck him, he said sure if he could locate 20 such peo could establish a political party wi credibility. He then thought he nee many people as there were MP's. used to look at the faces of our MLA wonder what would my tribe of 350 or So my list kept expanding. In the mea became involved with the Janata Pa periment. The Janata Party was, afte idea, an idea of creating a nation native to Congress(I). Look where us! In 1980 I told the national exec the party that the question they shou themselves is not why they had lost but why they had won in 1977. The co the Janata Party stays with us—and still. Opposition leaders in this count do not seem to understand that a p party is not a theory of counting bo creating credibility."

Increasingly Mody had come that his own credibility as a politic questionable as a member of any opp group; slowly, he said, his co brought him to the conclusion that ded the support of half a million pledged to his Nav Nirman concep cept that ensured that the end pur politics is not to win elections but good government".

Mody said that he arrived at the of half a million people to attain his by following a simple, time-worn tural principle: "The system of leadership in India has always bee rarchical shaped, with the apex at and the enlarged base at the bottom Egyptian pyramid. Now supposing verted the pyramid and built it, with at the bottom, you would elimin hierarchy that eats into the grass ro instead have one that nourishes it."

For creating such a politic Mody's body of half a million w were to each look after a polling bo smallest identifiable political uni country. Each member of his party wise gainfully employed he insisted spend two to four hours of his spar week in an absolute commitment to residents registered at one polling "It's the only way," he said, "you hope to exchange values fairly: you service and demand a vote." As support, including financial, Mody believed that money power could

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...and politicians, urging him not to fall
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...ar-fetched as Mody's final scheme
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...among politicians, but he recognised
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...ges in politics were brought about
...the strength of human beings but by
...ges they generated. "The world re-
...ound an idea," he said, "and every
...has its solution given a clean heart,
...ntion and determination."

usade
or Change

FEW CHIEF ministers can match Jagannath Mishra's skill in the precarious business of tight-rope walking. Last fortnight, Mishra continued to hold his own in the face of stepped-up dissi-
...heads rolled at the Centre in the
...Congress(I)'s humiliating defeat
...ings in the south. Said he confi-
"Bihar is causing the minimum
...to the prime minister. Ten to 20
...ting me will not make me quit."
...ever, sources within the Cong-
...fided that the post-election re-

vamping of the party had led to a stiffening of the high command's attitude towards Mishra and the performance of his Government was being closely scrutinised. Signalling the change, the sudden postponement of the organisational elections last fortnight came as a severe blow to Mishra, who had nearly succeeded in nominating district level office-bearers contrary to the high command's wishes.

Mishra's troubles in fact began much before Mrs Gandhi introduced her mini-Kamaraj plan of sorts, aimed at reorganisation. In a spate of overt dissidence, a number of state Congress(I) legislators and MP's threatened the Centre that Mishra's retention would not only constrain them into open revolt but would also lead to the party's defeat in the next Bihar election. The dissidents, whose number had never exceeded 25 in the last two years, received a moral boost when veteran tribal leader Bagun Sumbrui, MP, K.K. Tiwary, MP, and the newly appointed whip of the CLP, Mohammad Shakoor, joined the anti-Mishra lobby. Claimed Ashwani Kumar Sharma, who was recently suspended from the party and the CLP by Mishra on the charge of anti-party activities, that 68 legislators had already signed a memorandum against the chief minister.

Mishra: putting on a brave front

Allegations: Sharma, who is currently heading the dissidents, asserted that apart from 37 ministers and 50 legislators who had received sinecures in boards and corporations, "we are in a majority and are ready for a showdown at any given time." Strongly worded letters to Mrs Gandhi from Sharma, Sumbrui, Shakoor, former minister and Harijan leader Mahavir Paswan, Bandi Oraon and Ram Ratan Ram, besides other representatives of tribals, Harijans and minority communities, have all listed Mishra's alleged encouragement to anti-party and anti-social elements in bullying Indira loyalists, and emphasised the necessity of removing him to avoid a repetition of the southern debacle in Bihar.

This crescendo of acrimonious voices has prompted strong counter-moves from Mishra loyalists. At a meeting held at the residence of Mahachandra Prasad Singh they demanded stern disciplinary action against the dissidents. Simultaneously, they launched a glossy poster campaign, congratulating Mishra on his visit to Moscow as Mrs Gandhi's nominee.

Matching these moves, Mishra, who dismissed dissidents as disgruntled elements, sought to counter his alleged failure in implementing the 20-point programme by undertaking a hectic five-day search of the state for scapegoats. At almost every meeting, the chief minister blamed a section of officials for the failure of the programme, and threatened those who failed to achieve financial targets by March-end with suspension.

Hasty Move: Mishra also reportedly dropped the idea of reshuffling his Cabinet and instead reshuffled the programme implementation district committees, of which ministers were in charge. However, his actions have given rise to allegations of political victimisation, since Ishwari Paswan, a Harijan deputy minister, was relieved of his district charge for his failure to supervise the implementation seriously. Numbered among Harijan leaders who were sore over Mishra's actions against a Harijan minister of state, Paswan had been attending meetings of the Harijan bloc within the party.

Continuing their unsuccessful crusade last fortnight, Bihar dissidents defied the high command's directives and pitched their tents in New Delhi to press for Mishra's ouster. Meanwhile, the chief minister, in an interim bid calculated to extend his uncertain lease with the Centre, virtually coerced 1,000-odd state government employees to opt for election duty in riot-torn Assam, offering them the carrot of one month's special pay, Rs 2 lakh as insurance, and career-long pay to their families in the event of any mishap.

Closer home, however, Mishra appeared to have confirmed dissident and opposition charges that while the 20-point programme had only been implemented on paper, the public exchequer had been plundered in the name of his 33-point welfare programme, which included social security pension and unemployment allowance. The burden on the non-plan sector increased so much that the Planning Commission slashed the state's budget from Rs 670 crore to Rs 610 crore, with the possibility of further cuts in the near future. Secretariat sources felt that the rise in the state's non-plan expenditure had created an additional burden of Rs 209 crore—the Government having spent the not insignificant sum of Rs 90 crore on social security alone.

Financial Strictures: Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank had advised banks to dishonour Bihar cheques, since the state owed heavy unauthorised overdrafts. Reacting to the pruned resources, a panic-stricken Government has upset all developmental activities and ordered the treasury to stop all payments except staff salaries and dearness allowances. Commenting on the situation, Opposition leader Karpoori Thakur has de-

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as open loot in the name of welfare

nevertheless, in a note circulated th- his Public Relations Department, on of his discussion with the Union minister, an undeterred Mishra to claim that, "political reverses there do not reflect the general will people; the faith of the common man Congress(I) remains unshaken and we ward to a rosy future with zeal and vigour".

—FARZAND AHMED

he Crime usters

WHEN Tutul, a local Dhanbad tough went to collect his regular *rangdari* tax from a local businessman last fortnight he got a rude shock. For the first time the businessman refused to pay. more surprising, the entire business many downed shutters for a day in against the activities of Dhanbad's who have for years been extorting return for the 'privilege' of letting carry on their business.

The new-found courage of the shopkeeper comes in the wake of a drive by the Dhanbad administ- and the authorities of the Bharat Coal Limited (BCCL) to clean up the Dhanbad's cynical populace has seen drives before. But the first inkling that this one was serious was when criminals were rounded up in the first of the drive.

Tough Job: Most of the jailed men had running protection rackets of one sort other. Police say that the toughs from roadside dwellings or shops encroached land. The first job was ob- to identify the criminals and eject from the land. Says one executive in charge of the drive: "It was a job to clean the area because a lot of interests were involved but once it decided to do it, it was executed quickly administration ignoring the pressures."

effects of the drive have begun to immediately. During the last two mo- since the crackdown began, crime in has dipped sharply. In the no- West Munidih Colliery area there only one political murder. Among behind bars are Janata Party leader Singh, MLA and Rajkumar Rai.

Another man high on the police wanted list is Sakaldeo Singh.

The initial successes are, however, no indication that crime has been checked in Dhanbad. It is far too deeply entrenched to respond to such easy solutions. But one encouraging sign this time is that the Chairman-cum-Managing Director of BCCL C.S. Jha and Dhanbad Deputy Commissioner J.S. Brar have joined hands in their efforts to curb crime. The two have also formed an organisation called the Joint Voluntary Forum—an advisory body which is suggesting methods to root out corruption as well as welfare measures for workers.

It is common knowledge that BCCL is the fount of the crime and corruption that plague the city. An incredible 1,300 BCCL employees are involved in 567 criminal cases. An administration report says that 5,000 of the 1.7 lakh workers are "impostors" employed by colliery level officers to work as thugs collecting tolls. Even former Union energy minister A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chaudhury last year described some BCCL officers as, "moneylenders, thieves and associates of the mafia". Administration sources say that when 58 trucks carrying sand illegally for BCCL were seized, company officials began to raise a furore. Truckers were apparently drawing huge amounts on the basis of bogus bills.

Main Source: Brar, who has masterminded the anti-crime drive points out that the BCCL private contract system is the main source of the criminals' wealth. He cites a Union Home Ministry report to prove his point. BCCL sources, however, claim that 80 per cent of private contract work has been abolished and the work is being handled by the company itself. They add that 132 contracts involving Rs 100 crore have been abolished and about a dozen contractors have been blacklisted. Jha has also ordered the transfer of 600 officers as a part of the drive.

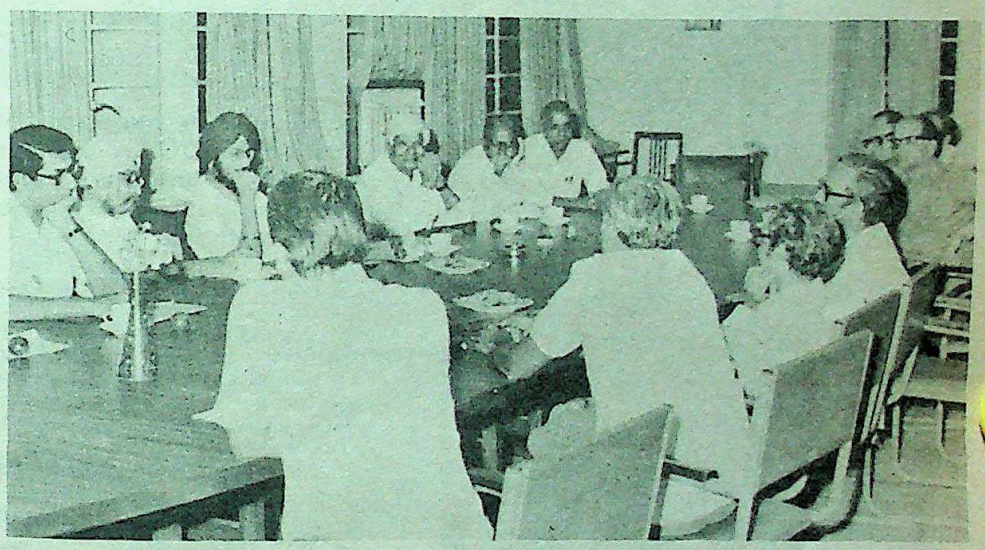
But whether this will begin to stem the rot is another matter. The special branch of the CBI in Dhanbad which investigates corruption in public sector organisations has already unearthed rackets worth Rs 50 crore. A CBI spokesman says that 102 BCCL employees are facing inquiries for crimes ranging from cheating to forgery and falsification of documents. Forty-five people have also been arrested.

Corruption in BCCL has many forms. The President of the All India Coalmines Association I.B. Pandey recently said that coal is pilfered from the pitheads and railway yards. BCCL spokesmen, however, say that they have recovered Rs 2 lakh worth of coal.

The Voluntary Forum is also trying to wipe out the money-lending business which was one of the main sources of income for trade union leaders, who lend money to workers and then usurp their wages. According to BCCL sources special raids are conducted on every wage payment day. But when the authorities delved deep into the matter they found that many BCCL staffers are also neck deep in the money-lending business. The district authorities are preparing a list of all the staffers involved in money-lending. They are also arranging for alternate sources of credit which will put an end to workers' indebtedness. In addition, a concerted drive is on to wipe out illiteracy.

But though the administration has made a good start everybody is waiting to see whether it will have a long-lasting effect. In the past the criminals have used their political contacts and survived all onslaughts emerging stronger each time. Whether that will happen again is something only time will tell.

—FARZAND AHMED in Dhanbad



A meeting of the Joint Voluntary Forum: operation clean-up

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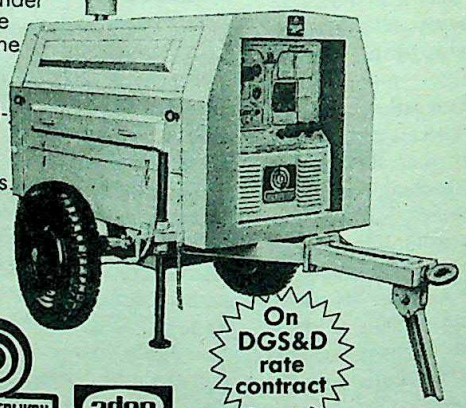

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MADHYA PRADESH

The Sins Of Sakhlecha?

The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) hopes of grabbing power in the next assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh received a major setback last fortnight. On February 8, BJP leader and former chief minister Virendra Kumar Sakhlecha was taken to court, charged with corruption while he was in power. This is the first time under Congress(I) rule that a former chief minister is standing trial anywhere in the country.

The charges however are serious. Sakhlecha is being prosecuted under Section 5(2) and Section 5 (i) (e) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947: for being a public servant, in possession of assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. The sentence in such a case can extend for up to seven years and a stiff fine.

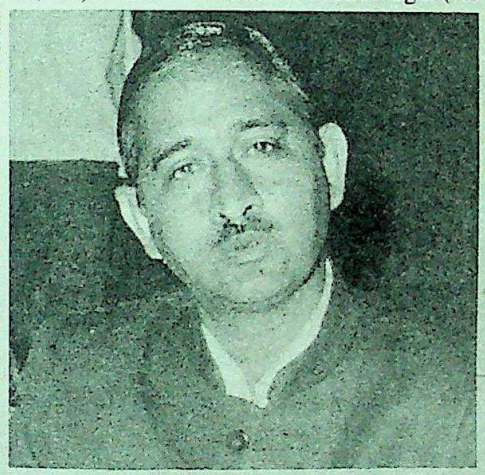
Serious Charges: The first indication that the Congress(I) Government intended action came on September 1, 1981 when Chief Minister Arjun Singh dropped a hint to this effect. Sakhlecha, a lawyer himself, promptly secured anticipatory bail eight days later. The next step came on June 1, 1982 when the police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) lodged a first information report alleging that during his 31 months in office—seven as minister and 24 months as chief minister—Sakhlecha and his family acquired wealth to the tune of Rs 12 lakh over and that could not be explained by his known sources of income.

More than eight months after the lodging of the FIR, according to the police case, investigations now show that disproportionate assets amount to Rs 30.66 lakh—a figure two and a half times greater than the one in the FIR. Moreover, beyond the period when he was in power, the Sakhlecha family is said to have incurred expenditure and acquired assets worth Rs 26.95 lakh. According to the EOW these additional assets and expenditure beyond the period of check are the spillover of assets acquired during the check period. In effect, the accused is alleged to have acquired assets (and incurred expenditure) worth Rs 57.61 lakh.

According to the charge-sheet filed in court, Sakhlecha's total assets just before he left the ministry were worth Rs 3,56,494. Of these the major assets were land and house worth Rs 1,96,389, and a bank balance of Rs 1,36. During 31 months in power, Sakhlecha's income from known sources was Rs 1,94,831.84 while his expenses during the same period was Rs 90,014 which meant his maximum savings could have been Rs 1,04,817.84. In effect, while in power, Sakhlecha could have acquired assets worth just over a lakh rupees while, according to the charge-sheet, the facts are otherwise. By the time he was compelled to give up the reins of power, the Sakhlecha family sat on wealth of Rs 35.27 lakh. In the charge-sheet the break-up has been listed as:

► Immovable property valued at Rs 58,778. This includes six parcels of land totalling 28.74 hectares and three house plots;

► Houses of Rs 7.11 lakh. This includes, among others, a huge house in Bhopal's Professor Colony (Rs 3.90 lakh), a middle income group flat in Saket, New Delhi (Rs 66,930), one in Neemuch's Shastri Nagar (Rs 1.05 lakh) and another in the same city (Rs 65,697);



RAJENDRA JAIN

Sakhlecha: under a cloud

► Units and shares in several-well known companies worth Rs 1.09 lakh;

► Deposits in banks amounting to Rs 9.89 lakh. Of this, Rs 7.23 lakh was in fixed deposits, and the rest in current accounts. Before he became minister, his family had eight bank accounts but during his months in the chair, 28 new accounts were opened. During this time, 29 long-term accounts were also started;

► National Defence Bonds of Rs 1.23 lakh;

► Deposits with companies, firms and share brokers amounting to Rs 4.41 lakh;

► Investments in business firms and family concerns of the value of Rs 9.55 lakh;

► Rs 1.82 lakh was paid as advance for purchase of property;

► A car and a scooter bought worth Rs 17,594.

The charge-sheet says that, while computing sums, care has been taken to see that bank loans and institutional finance have not been included. It goes on to say that though Sakhlecha was given "adequate opportunity to explain" his spiralling assets, he failed to do so. According to the EOW, in the course of the investigation more than 500 witnesses were questioned and more than 5,000 documents examined.

Sakhlecha, a Rajya Sabha member before coming to power in the state, has consistently and angrily denied the charges levelled against him, dismissing them as politically motivated. In fact, he has even once met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, complaining of persecution and harassment by the state Government. Sakhlecha was unavailable for comment about his being charge-sheeted.

Handy Target: Arjun Singh has used him as a handy stick to beat the BJP with. The best example of this was late last year when the BJP brought a no confidence motion against the Singh Government in the Assembly but their attack was scattered when Singh started levelling specific allegations against Sakhlecha instead.

Retorted the former chief minister in the Assembly: "He is making allegations on the basis of police investigations in a spirit of revenge....Why don't you tell your chief minister that he is levelling false and untrue allegations?....You want to level false allegations which cannot hold water. They will not bear the test in a law court no matter how much police evidence you muster...."

Whether or not the case will stand in court will be decided in the coming months. But Sakhlecha's basic argument is that assets acquired by him before he became a minister have been included in the list and, moreover, the value of his property had been deliberately inflated. Some of his examples:

► His son (Om Prakash) was allotted land and a shed before he became a minister.

► The family's ancestral house in his constituency Jawad, in district Mandsaur, has been mentioned as one of the assets acquired during his years in power;

► The Unit Trust shares included were actually acquired in the early sixties.

► The National Defence Bonds were purchased soon after he resigned his Rajya Sabha seat. Sakhlecha says that the account books of the State Bank of India's parliament branch will show that he bought the bonds before he came to power.

The case is bound to be a bitterly contested one. An idea of just how vital the case can be in state politics can be had from the fact that it was filed two days before the important civic elections in Bhopal and Indore—a coincidence that cannot be ignored. The court drama is bound to effect the two major political parties in the state.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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MADHYA PRADESH

Ghosts From The Past

LAST FORTNIGHT the past caught up with 31-year-old Satyavrat Chaturvedi, the bearded deputy minister for major and medium irrigation in the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet. A division bench of the High Court at Jabalpur found Chaturvedi and five accomplices guilty of rioting and kidnapping, condemning Chaturvedi to three years' rigorous imprisonment. Chaturvedi, whose mother is Lok Sabha MP Vidyavati Chaturvedi and whose father was a minister in the P.C. Sethi ministry has since resigned from ministership.

The incident that led to this sentence occurred nearly 10 years ago in Chaturvedi's home district of Chhatarpur. The luckless victim, Brindaban Ahir of a village called Buda, had bought land in which one of the accused—a relative of Chaturvedi—was interested. On the afternoon of April 27, 1973 a jeep with eight armed men drew up in front of the house where Brindaban lived with his wife Nanhibai. Chaturvedi—better known locally as Vinod—carried a gun and did most of the talking. He asked Brindaban to accompany them to Ramgarh, a village one kilometre away, to settle the dispute. Brindaban, who was apprehensive, was forced into the jeep and taken ultimately to his death.

Chaturvedi: political cover-up?

Some time later, a head constable on duty heard gun shots and rushing to investigate in Ramgarh, found a severely injured Brindaban bound by a rope with five men standing guard over him. The head constable took Brindaban and the men to Chhatarpur. There, head constable Mohammed Yakis and Constable Ataullah were assigned to take the victim to hospital. He was conscious when admitted at midnight but died about 30 minutes later.

Grave Injuries: The post-mortem listed 11 injuries all over his body, caused by "hard and blunt objects". If after the brutal beating he succumbed because of shock and haemorrhage it was hardly surprising. He had been tied and beaten systematically with lathis and gun butts: every single limb had multiple fractures.

Chaturvedi was, surprisingly, not arrested and the five men on the spot—Sukla, Ballu, Karanjua, Kadori and Kashiprasad—were taken to court. But on January 29, 1974, the additional sessions judge of Chhatarpur acquitted them all observing that a fresh police investigation was necessary. Meanwhile, the victim's father, Sunderlal met the chief minister in Bhopal and the prime minister in New Delhi alleging that an attempt was being made to shield Chaturvedi because of his political influence. The state CID stepped into the picture and on June 20, 1978 the case came up before the additional sessions judge once more: this time Chaturvedi and five others were the defendants. But the judge was not convinced, saying that the lacunae in the case introduced earlier, gave rise to doubt about the identity of the assailants. The Government then went in appeal to the high court.

The high court judgement was of interest as it gave an insight into village politics, the crime that goes with it and the inability of the trial court to nail a culprit with considerable political influence, exposing it in an extremely unfavourable light. The trial court had rejected the testimony of Nanhibai as well as Sunderlal, the victim's father. The high court justices ruled that "the trial court has clearly erred in taking the view that her (Nanhibai's) version is not consistent". The judgement also adds: "The trial court has rejected the testimony of Sunderlal also on the ground that the name of Vinod Chaturvedi is not mentioned as one of the culprits in the case diary statement recorded on 30.4.73....This is a patent misreading as...the name of Vinod Chaturvedi carrying a gun being expressly mentioned therein....The trial court has clearly erred in misreading the evidence."

The defence case was that due to local political rivalry, Chaturvedi's name was being needlessly dragged in. There were some witnesses to the crime—apparently committed in public—but they turned hostile. There was no help for Brindaban because of "fear of Vinod Chaturvedi who had great influence in the area...the nature of the incident itself indicates that the culprits were not afraid of the authorities and the people were so terror-stricken that no one intervene during the commission of crime". The judgement is also critical local authorities during the investigation.

Withstanding Pressure: In the absence of direct witnesses, there was the question establishing who precisely had committed the crime. The case was clinched, however, due to the testimony of Ataullah, one of two constables who had taken Brindaban hospital in Chhatarpur. Reads the judgement: "We must commend Ataullah, lowest official, for being bold enough withstand pressure to which his superiors succumbed."

Brindaban's end could not have amidst greater mystery. On the way hospital, Brindaban who was dying Ataullah that Chaturvedi and his colleagues ions had assaulted him. On being admitted Dr K.D. Khare took charge of the patient magistrate was not available to record dying declaration.

According to the policemen, Khare ked them to leave the room so that he record the dying declaration. But in Khare denied this saying that the merely told him that he had been beaten did not even disclose the identity assailants. While the court could get out of Khare, it was not convinced about lack of information: "There is evidence suggest, including the testimony of the cemen that Dr Khare did record a declaration after asking the policemen leave...it has been held back in order shield the culprits."

The revelation of a common criminal Chief Minister Arjun Singh's colleagues ministers has undoubtedly come as a shock to the common public and the ruling party. While Singh's defence that Chaturvedi was an acquitted man inducted, that is hardly convincing. former chief minister and Bharatiya Party leader Virendra Kumar Sakhlecha who currently faces charges of corruption "Arjun Singh is busy flinging mud at but look at his own people. Are these standards to be maintained in public

Singh must be regretting the agreed to induct Chaturvedi who was minister only four months ago. Chaturvedi said to beiong to the P.C. Sethi faction. Meanwhile, Chaturvedi is expected to go in appeal to the Supreme Court is turned down there, he will lose his seat and be debarred from contesting tions for the next six years. However, his political career is in a shambles and the incident will provide the Opposition and the Congress(I) dissidents with another reason for demanding Arjun Singh's removal.

—SREEKANT KHARE

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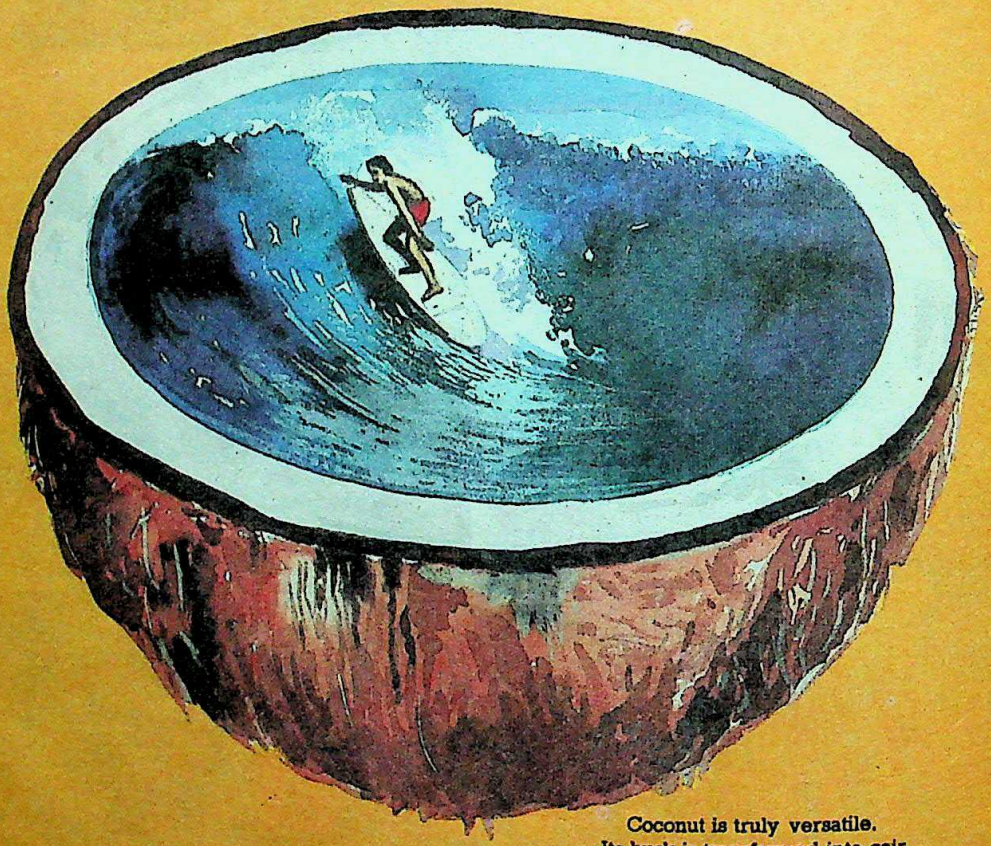

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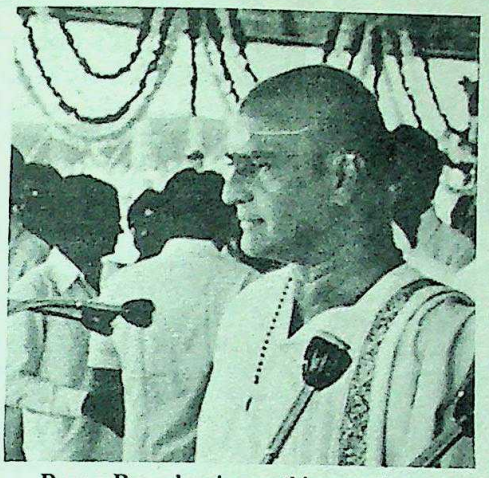
ANDHRA PRADESH

Crucial Contest

LESS than a month after the Telugu Desam triumph in the January polls, political parties are back on the election trail to fill the four vacant seats in the 294-seat Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly. Of these, two—Tirupati and Yemmiganur—fell vacant as Chief Minister Rama Rao preferred to represent his Gudivada constituency, and the Congress(I) chief minister K. Vijaybhaskara Reddy retained his seat in Madanapalle, vacating the Yemmiganur seat in Legislative Assembly. As for the other seat, election for the Madanapalle seat could be held following the death of a candidate, and in the Himayatnagar constituency in Hyderabad, the Telugu Desam MLA G. Narayana Goud died a few hours after the result was declared.

The ruling party has made no effort to hide the immense importance it attaches to the forthcoming contests. The newly elected MLAs and NTR Yuva Sena volunteers, touring from door to door with cut-outs of Rama Rao, loudspeakers blaring his pre-recorded speeches and Telugu Desam flags flying at street corners, are leaving nothing to chance. Yet, as things stand, more than a fortnight before the February 27 by-



Rama Rao: leaving nothing to chance

election, the Telugu Desam faces a stiff challenge in Himayatnagar. The party's candidate, P. Upendra, Rama Rao's confidential aide, takes on A. Narendra of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), T. Lakshmikanthamma of the Congress(I), a former MLA from here, and N. Narasimha Reddy (Janata), besides a dozen independents. Says Upendra: "The contest is keen but we are sure the voters will once again assert their faith in NTR and our party."

The Congress(I) election machinery which appeared to have ground to a halt, began moving only after the last hour for withdrawal of nominations, as infighting forced party President G. Venkataswamy to withhold the list till the end. For party candidate Lakshmikanthamma, a familiar face in the constituency, the support of all Congress(I) activists is no certainty. But Union Minister P. Shiv Shankar, of whose Lok Sabha constituency Himayatnagar is a part, and former chief minister T. Anjiah have pledged to work hard for a victory. Promising a stiff contest, however, the Telugu Desam has had activists from other city constituencies fanning out seeking support before Rama Rao himself joins the campaign in its last week.

Split Opposition: The BJP candidate, Narendra, a rabble-rouser, is contesting from Himayatnagar for the first time. Considered a bigger draw, he might succeed in wiping out the margin of 3,900 votes by which the party lost this seat in the January polls. But their calculations may be upset by Janata's Narasimha Reddy. A popular legislator and trade union leader, Reddy lost by a narrow margin of 307 votes in the neighbouring Mushirabad constituency to the Telugu Desam in January. Says a Janata supporter: "If only the BJP had not contested there, Reddy would have easily won. They split the opposition votes and now we are taking revenge."

All this is only to the advantage of the Telugu Desam which has also managed to have an understanding with the local Majlis—Ittehadul Muslimeen—for about

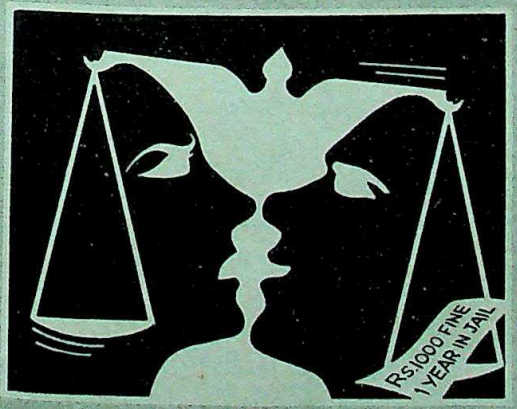
LAW

Buss Stop

IT COULD be the most expensive kiss in Indian judicial history. Last fortnight Additional Metropolitan Magistrate J.M. Malik told surprised spectators that Satya Singh, an electrical mechanic in the Railways, would be sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment and a Rs 1,000 fine for forcibly kissing a young woman working in his firm's New Delhi garment factory. If he failed to pay the fine, which would go to the plaintiff as compensation, his imprisonment would be lengthened by another six months.

The incident that led to Singh's indictment had occurred on May 24, 1979. Finding Vimla Devi, who had been employed for two months as a typist as the school she worked in was closed for the summer, alone he took her by the arms and kissed her cheeks. Vimla objected and said later: "I told him that I used to respect him like an uncle and why was he behaving indecently with me?" Seeing that she was visibly agitated Singh begged her forgiveness but Vimla ran out onto the street where she met her mother. They immediately lodged a complaint.

Lengthy Process: The police acted promptly and the long process of fighting the case started. At first Singh tried to prevaricate using all kinds of excuses. Said his defence counsel: "Vimla was a woman of bad character. Satya Singh has been falsely implicated." But after the cross examination when the prosecution had established that Vimla had in fact been kissed against her will Singh changed his belligerent stance. The defence pleaded that as this was Singh's first offence and as he was a government officer he should be treated leniently.



Malik however, was firm. Said he: "I do not see much force in these arguments. Why should people indulging in such acts be allowed to go scot-free?" He went on to say: "It is the saddest fact of our times that women hesitate in taking jobs in private concerns, out of fear that suchlike acts may occur. Under these circumstances it becomes the duty of the courts to tell criminals that the triumphing of the wicked is short. In order to put an end to these crimes the courts are left with no option but to deal with those indulging in suchlike unholy, unwanted and anti-social acts sternly." With the court taking such a rigid stand Singh's fate had been sealed with the kiss.

—ASOKA RAINA

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ASSAM FRONTIER

ASSAM FRONTIER TEA LTD.

Company returns to profitable position, declares dividend of 8%

Chairman's speech delivered at the Fifth Annual General Meeting

MR. SURRENDRA PAUL

It is my privilege to welcome you to the Fifth Annual General Meeting to consider and approve the Report and Accounts for the year ended June 30, 1982. The tea production has been higher at 98.14 lakhs Kgs. compared to the previous year's 90.71 lakhs Kgs. Sales have also been higher at Rs. 15.59 crores compared to the previous year's Rs. 15.06 crores. Even the exports are slightly higher at 34% compared to the previous year's 33.29%. This is adequately reflected in the Company's return to a profitable position so that we have been able to recommend a dividend of 8%.

Reconstituted Board

Caparo Group Ltd. of U.K. has acquired the entire shareholdings o Assam Frontier Tea Holdings P.L.C. which controls 74% of the issued share capital of your Company in India. The entire Board of Management has since been reconstituted and it has elected me as your Chairman and two well-known Tea people Mr. Dipak Roy, Chairman of J. Thomas & Co. Pvt. Ltd. and Mr. Vijay Dudeja, Managing Director of Contemporary Tea Co. Ltd., and Mr. S. N. Sharma, Calcutta Manager of Empire Plantations (India) Ltd. and Singlo (India) Tea Co. Ltd., as Directors. The Board also inducted Mr. Amrit Sethi, an able and well-known Planter with 27-years experience as General Manager. Mr. Sethi was the General Manager of Empire Plantations (India) Ltd. and Singlo (India) Tea Co. Ltd. consisting of 8 gardens belonging to this group. The existing managers and staff of your Company are experienced and knowledgeable professionals and under the leadership of Mr Amrit Sethi, they have already started showing good results.

Fresh outlook

Today we are faced with the same difficulties and problems as the other tea companies, but we intend to take a fresh look at these and see that this Company's position is strengthened to a point that it can withstand the considerable market fluctuations. While we will try to overcome the situations ourselves, I will fail in my duty if I do not call on the State and Central Governments for the help which only they can give.

First of all, I would request the Assam Government to look seriously at the problem of labour housing at the tea gardens and not to forget that this is primarily their obligation. The tea companies in the past assumed the responsibility but they just do not have the funds to provide this without Government's help. The Government should either construct the houses themselves or give the tea companies funds to enable them to do it. The subsidy of Rs.1,500 per house which was sanctioned ten years ago is definitely not adequate today.

The Assam Government and the Government of India together get almost 70% of the income by way of agriculture tax and income tax and the balance 30% is quite indequate to give a reasonable return on Equity to the shareholders and to plough funds into the Company. Like other public limited manufacturing companies where the total tax burden does not exceed 55%, there is no reason why the total tax should be higher for tea companies. If we are able to develop our company by ploughing back our own funds, we can also stop bothering the Government for soft loans and various other assistance. To ensure that the funds are actually invested back into the companies the Government may impose a maximum dividend.

Brighter prospects

The prospects for tea do look better at present but I feel that the industry is not out of the woods since it has yet to learn to cope with rising costs. I ask the representatives of the Tea Industry and the Labour Unions to be practical and realistic in the next negotiations bearing in mind that the long term future of the Industry is not sacrificed for any short term gains. While the labour is definitely entitled to a fair share of their efforts, we do not want to make it unremunerative for the shareholders to invest in this business. The new management has applied themselves deeply to cost reduction and are certain that we have the knowhow and the ability to effect these reductions which will bear fruit in the current financial year.

For various reasons the Company has not had any substantial infusion of funds in last many years and so there has been no development in the fields or in the factories. A long term programme is being drawn up to make up this deficiency in the next five years. The funds will partly come from within and partly from the financial institutions. The benefits of this development programme will be an increase in the crops and a better price realization for the produce of the Company. This is an absolute must for the future good health of the Company.

I am a member of the APEEJAY GROUP and bring its full ability and managerial skills to this Company. We are known to be successful in business and will make this a great TEA Company again.

Financial highlights	Year ended June '82	Year ended June '81
	(RUPEES IN LAKHS)	
Profits before interest and depreciation	136.97	(18.03)
Interest	49.01	15.22
Depreciation	32.05	34.70
Profit before tax	55.91	(67.95)

Financial position of the Company	1982	1981	1980
Share Capital	300	300	300
Reserves & Surplus	74	64	100
Net Worth	374	364	400
Fixed Assets	510	508	493
Earning per share (Rs)	1.86	(2.26)	3.26

Note : This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the Fifth Annual General Meeting.

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the Muslim votes. Facing an uphill task, the opposition parties in the state are yet to find an issue on which they can attack the six-year-old Government of Rama Rao. But one says sarcastically: "People are enjoying the acting. It is a long feature film but suddenly one day the screen will go blank." In the other constituencies, it is a straight fight between the Telugu Desam and the Congress(I), though there are a number of independents in the field. Expectations are that the ruling party will win comfortably both in Tirupati and Madanapalle though the margin may not be as wide as the 47,000 votes by which Rama Rao won in Tirupati. Interestingly, the Telugu Desam prospects are not as bright in Yemmiganur, though its candidate B.V. Mohan Reddy is an astrologer friend of Rama Rao. He is known to fix the *muhurat* of Rao's films and other ventures and used to be given the first day's collection of any new film screened in his native town Kurnool. He was picked in preference to Abdul Razack, a local Muslim, who lost to Vijayabhaskara Reddy in January. The Congress(I) candidate is K.R. Hanumantha Reddy who was elected from this constituency in 1978. With Vijayabhaskara Reddy taking the responsibility for ensuring a Congress(I) victory, the services of astrologer Mohan Reddy will probably continue to remain on offer.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

SANCHAITA

Financial Fiddling

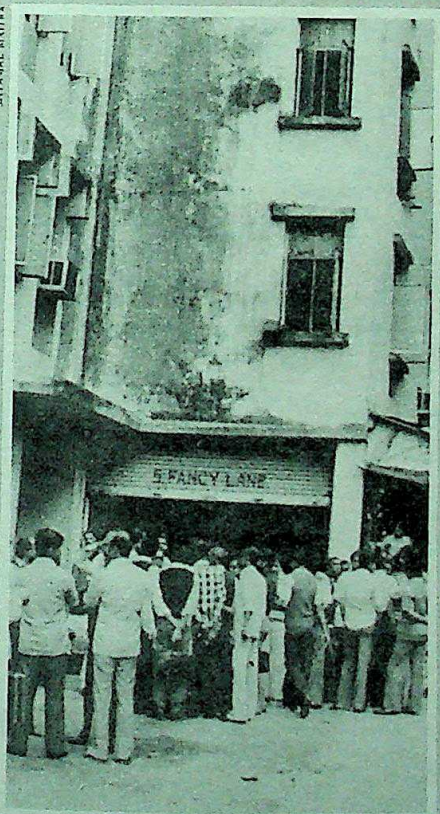
IT WAS to have been a Hindi version of the Hollywood block-buster, *Jaws* with thrilling underwater scenes where the hero takes on a school of sharks. But last fortnight reality took over from illusion and the two main backers of *Atanka* (Panic)—Tapan Guha and Subrata Mukherjee—found themselves snapped up by the law for contravening the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA). For Guha who is already up to his neck in trouble as the state Government delves into the affairs of his Sanchaita Investment Company, the new case was just one more addition to his host of problems.

The case against Guha and Subrata Mukherjee is that, using money from Sanchaita they formed a company called Sunlight Films in Bombay to make movies. One of the biggest films planned by the company was *Atanka* which was to have location shooting in the US and Japan. Unfortunately for the would-be film makers their request for foreign exchange was rejected by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Undeterred by this, however, the two went on with their plans and are said to have been assured money from a man named Bikram Choudhury, a Calcutta boy who has made it good in the US by starting a string of yoga institutions.

Prosecution Case: The prosecution's story is that Guha and Subrata Mukherjee visited the US two years ago and arranged a loan of around $1 million (Rs 80 lakh) which was deposited in a New York bank in Subrata Mukherjee's name. This was, according to the Government, a clear contravention of FERA. Later the Government says that $1 lakh (Rs 8 lakh) was transferred to a Tokyo bank to meet the expenses of location shooting in Japan.

Government sources here also say that work on the film started and some of the biggest names of the Bombay film industry were flown out for location shooting. Officers in charge of the case, however, refused to name the stars saying that this would hamper their inquiry.

Guha's visits abroad, however, attracted the attention of the Enforcement Department. And once they got onto his trail they were soon able to pick up enough information to rope in both Subrata Mukherjee and him. Guha was arrested first in Bombay and a search of his houses in Bombay and Calcutta are reported to have led to the seizing of documents relevant to the case. Mukherjee proved a more slippery customer, and the police were unable to trace him until the Enforcement Department got a tip-off about his whereabouts. He was finally arrested in Calcutta. The court released him on bail with instructions to report to the investigating officer every other day.



SHYAMAL BHATTA

Sanchaita's Calcutta offices: hot water

While Guha started his career as a clerk in the RBI little is known about Subrata Mukherjee. From the records available with the Government it appears that his association with Guha and Shambhu Mukherjee, also of Sanchaita fame, started a few years ago when they started a company named MGM—the two Ms standing for Mukherjee and the G for Guha—which was allegedly in the export business. So far however the Government has no idea of what kind of export business it indulged in and the company is not listed in the telephone directory.

Investors' Claims: But while the investigation moves on relentlessly Guha is facing trouble on another front. Last fortnight 45 small depositors moved the Supreme Court urging it to appoint an official receiver to take charge of the property of Sanchaita Investments and also set up a claims tribunal to process the claims of the depositors. Following the petition Chief Justice of India Y.V. Chandrachud and Justice V.D. Tulzapurkar issued notices to the Union of India, the state of West Bengal and the RBI asking for replies within three weeks.

Since the crackdown last year Sanchaita has practically stopped paying interest to its depositors. Many of the depositors are now in financial hot water as they had put their entire savings into the company. They have approached the court in desperation as the state Government seems unable to help them. A spokesman of the Bureau of Investigation here admits that the Government is helpless saying: "The only way we could have arranged return of deposits was by attaching the company's property but there are legal hurdles to it." And if it turns out that Sanchaita money was siphoned off to firms like Sunlight Films it seems unlikely that any of the depositors will ever see their money again.

—SUMANTA SEN

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TAMIL NADU

The Gut Issue

EVEN by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran's (MGR) histrionic standards, it was personalised political drama at its best. Faced with a mushrooming foodgrain crisis, MGR promptly undertook a well-publicised, seven-hour, working day "fast" last fortnight to protest against what he described as the Centre's inadequate foodgrain allotments to the drought-stricken state. Even if the chief minister's theatricals failed to galvanise the Centre into rushing emergency foodgrain stocks till the time of writing, MGR's melodrama certainly succeeded in focussing attention on the crisis.

Even for the flamboyant chief minister, the sight of him sitting cross-legged by the Marina Beach in Madras, while thousands filed past, must have been the gimmickiest thing he has done since coming to power in 1977. It was, in fact, effective enough for Union Agriculture Minister Rao Birendra Singh to frantically try and get MGR on the telephone to invite him to Delhi for talks. But the former matinee idol refused to relent and vowed to continue his fast "since it has already begun", but announced that the state Food and Finance Minster, V.R. Nedunchezhian, would shortly fly down to the capital with a team of officials to discuss the question of foodgrain supplies with the Centre. "If necessary," announced MGR, "I will also go."

But dramatics apart, the situation is the most serious the state has faced in recent years. Rice stocks, as of last week, average barely 2 lakh tonnes. The far-flung network of the state's public distribution system, which has been highly praised on previous occasions, swallows up an estimated 90,000 tonnes of rice every month. In addition to that, the ambitious midday meal scheme of the state Government accounts for another 17,000 tonnes of rice each month. Present stocks, therefore, will barely last another two months at the most.

Ignoring Pleas: The reason for the crisis is the savage drought that has hit the state now for two consecutive years. The state's rice production which averages 58 lakh tonnes a year was only about 38 lakh tonnes in 1982. It is not that the state Government has woken up late to the crisis. As early as six months ago, the food minister voiced the state's request for increased rice and wheat allotments from the Centre. Ever since, different state ministers have been singing the same tune. But the Centre has repeatedly turned a deaf ear to the pleas, on the grounds that Tamil Nadu has not fulfilled the quid pro quo between Central foodgrain allotments to the state and the state's foodgrains contributions to the Central pool. Rao Birendra Singh's charge was that Tamil Nadu had not been contributing to the Central pool. Union Minister of State for Home, P. Venkatasubbaiah, also wondered aloud "how the state can look to the Centre during difficult times when it had not supplied any rice to the Centre on its part".

The state Government's point is that it had been supplying rice to the Central pool whenever it had surplus rice to spare but there had been several instances of delay on the part of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in lifting the surplus from the state Government's godowns. The controversy, which has been simmering for some time, has now reached a crescendo once the bot[illegible] the state's rice bowl started showing [illegible] spectre of a near-famine started loomin[illegible] ger. The Union Agriculture Ministry [illegible] insult to injury by insinuating that the [illegible] had only itself to blame for the dire sta[illegible] now finds itself in.

In a hard-hitting press release [illegible] after MGR announced his protest fa[illegible] ministry drew attention to the fact th[illegible] off-take of rice from the state's distri[illegible] system had more than doubled in the [illegible] of last year, from 40,000 tonnes in Feb[illegible] to 92,000 tonnes in December. "This [illegible] increase in off-take has been occasion[illegible] injudicious management of the sto[illegible] charged the release. The note obv[illegible] stung MGR and the state Government [illegible] quick. Retorted MGR with barely-dis[illegible] irony: "If there was any injudicious [illegible] management it should be the result [illegible] state Government taking seriously one [illegible] main points of the prime minister's 20-p[illegible] programme which stresses the need fo[illegible] effective public distribution system to e[illegible] supply of essential food items to the pe[illegible] at fair prices."

Loudly denouncing the Ce[illegible] Government's charge that the state ha[illegible] been contributing to the Central poo[illegible] chief minister recalled that: "In 197[illegible] state had supplied 50,000 ton[illegible] rice. In 1972–73, its contributio[illegible] 1,11,000 tonnes and in 1975–[illegible] was 2,93,000 tonnes. In 1978–79 [illegible] state informed the Centre th[illegible] could offer 2 lakh tonnes but [illegible] of repeated letters and telegr[illegible] the FCI did not lift the stocks for [illegible] months. The Tamil Nadu [illegible] Supplies Corporation incurred [illegible] of Rs 4.5 crore as carrying ch[illegible] The FCI finally lifted just [illegible] tonnes."

Predictably, the crisis has a[illegible] red major political overtones. [illegible] Tamil Nadu Government's [illegible] singly belligerent attitude to[illegible] the Centre is being interpreted b[illegible] litical observers as the adopti[illegible] anti-Centre stance to cash in o[illegible] boost to regionalism in neig[illegible] ring Andhra Pradesh and Ka[illegible] ka.

The immediate provocati[illegible] the chief minister's fast is also [illegible] ted to be against the Reserve B[illegible] refusal to permit the state to [illegible] rice from Thailand. With th[illegible] and the Centre locking horns o[illegible] issue that affects almost the [illegible] population of Tamil Nadu, M[illegible] histrionics could be his [illegible] block-buster yet.

—R. VENKATE[illegible]

SUBHA NEWS PHOTO SERVICE

MGR on his fast: brave front

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TAMIL NADU

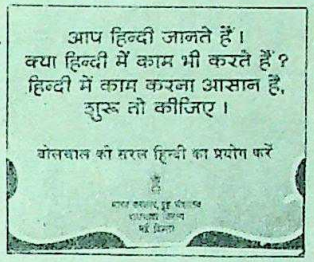
War Of Words

TAMILIAN politicians are hypersensitive to anything they see as an attempt to impose Hindi on them. It should have come as no surprise, therefore, when they seized upon a reported Railway Ministry circular that officials would have to pass Hindi examinations for their promotions to raise the Hindi bogey once again. Later reports that the Railway Ministry had not passed any such order did not quite calm the storm.

The Government lost no time in making its stand clear. Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) took the platform at a public meeting to fiercely declare: "So long as we keep our hearts and souls together Hindi will be the official language of the state." The next day the state Government made its views known officially through the Governor S.L. Khurana. Addressing the state legislature Khurana urged the state to "adhere to its earlier assurances".

These two statements triggered off a flurry of others from leaders of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). Writing in the AIADMK eveninger Nam Nadu, E.R. Janardhanam, an MLC, exhorted readers to "rally behind MGR to thwart national machinations to manipulate Hindi's subtle inroads into the Tamil bastion, through the railways and radio and television". DMK Assistant General Secretary Nanchil Manoharan questioned the "credentials of Hindi for being the common language of the people of the country". Another DMK MLA Rahman Khan asked why the Constitution "was conspicuously silent about linguistic discrimination".

Public Attitude: But even as the politicians are working themselves into a frenzy, there are subtle signs that the educated public in Madras is not quite so dogmatic on the language issue. Many people in the city agree that if Hindi will help them in their job they will have to learn it. Says R. Parthasarathy, an assistant manager in the Food Corporation of India (FCI): "The Hindi officialese which is taught is of practical help. Knowledge of Hindi is imperative even if one is transferred within the south zone itself, say to Hyderabad." Adds Hemalatha Anand, an FCI clerk: "The immediate attraction of acquiring proficiency in Hindi is the advance increment."



A pro-Hindi Government poster (top) and MGR: tongue-twister

The officers manning the Central Government's Hindi Teaching Scheme, who are in charge of teaching Hindi to government officers, claim that more people have been coming forward to learn Hindi of late. Teachers at the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, which has been teaching the language in the south, also tell the same story. At the FCI, Public Relations Officer T.S. Nagarajan says: "We had to scrounge and scrape for 30 students in 1979. Now we have 300 students. There is no resistance to learning Hindi."

The DMK and the AIADMK are, however, a long way from easing up on their resistance to Hindi. Says AIADMK General Secretary P.U. Shanmugam: "All these claims of overwhelming attendance are propaganda by the Hindi Prachar Sabha. We cannot accept Hindi as the official language." The battle of words continues.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

MADRAS

Watertight

WITH the water crisis looming large over Madras, the Government is trying its best to ensure that at least a trickle continues. It is concentrating its efforts on the Red Hills reservoir—surface area: 1.5 sq km—which feeds the city. Every day more than 10 million to 15 million litres of water evaporate into the atmosphere.

The Government is trying out an old technique to prevent evaporation that was discovered over 20 years ago. It involves spreading a thin layer of a chemical called cetyl alcohol over surface of the water. The film of cetyl alcohol reduces the rate of evaporation by between 20 per cent and 50 per cent. But though the method has been tested as far back as 1965 in Vihar Lake in Bombay and Poondi Reservoir in Tamil Nadu, it has never been thought worthwhile to put it to use. Says S. Daivamani, chief engineer of the Water Board: "We had reservations about its large-scale use."

The main difficulty that scientists have never been able to surmount is that wave action quickly rips apart the thin film formed by the chemical on the water. As a result the chemical which costs Rs 70 a kg has to be applied to the water surface every day. Says the Public Works Department Secretary K. Madhav Sharma: "The slightest wind or wave breaks the layer or rolls it to one side."

Simple Solution: But Red Hills is surrounded by arid land and because of this the rate of evaporation is particularly high. With the water crisis at its worst this season, scientists were forced to think up ways of stopping the evaporation. Scientists of the Ocean Engineering Centre (OEC) of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) at Madras hit upon a solution remarkable for its simplicity.

Since the film of chemical was destroyed by wave action they built rafts made of bamboo or casuarina, which, when placed at strategic intervals, prevented wave formation. The scientists led by Dr P.V. Indiresan and Dr. V.S. Raju tested their theory out in a little flume equipped with a wave simulator. After a week they discovered that the film of cetyl alcohol was intact.

For the best effects the scientists worked out that the rafts should be placed at intervals of 25-50 m in Red Hills. The finally decided that it would be better to use bamboo for the rafts as casuarina tended to discolour the water. In the end, however, the authorities seemed to favour using plastic rafts filled with sand as bamboo was likely to get stolen. The scientists also said that they had tested the rafts in waves of up to 4 cm high. In Red Hills, however, they said the waves are only 2 cm high.

But whatever the breakthrough may save it will not be enough. Already water is selling for 25 paise a litre in Madras. Schools and colleges are also planning to advance their vacations and there is even talk that the city may have to be evacuated. At the moment Madras is getting 181.8 million litres of water, against a demand of 363.6 million litres a day. With such shortages every little bit counts.

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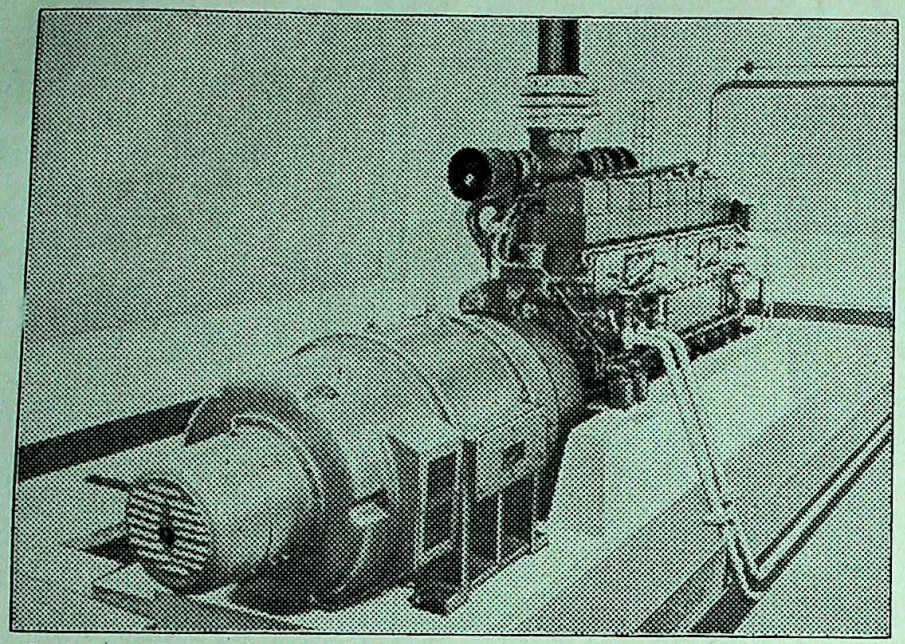

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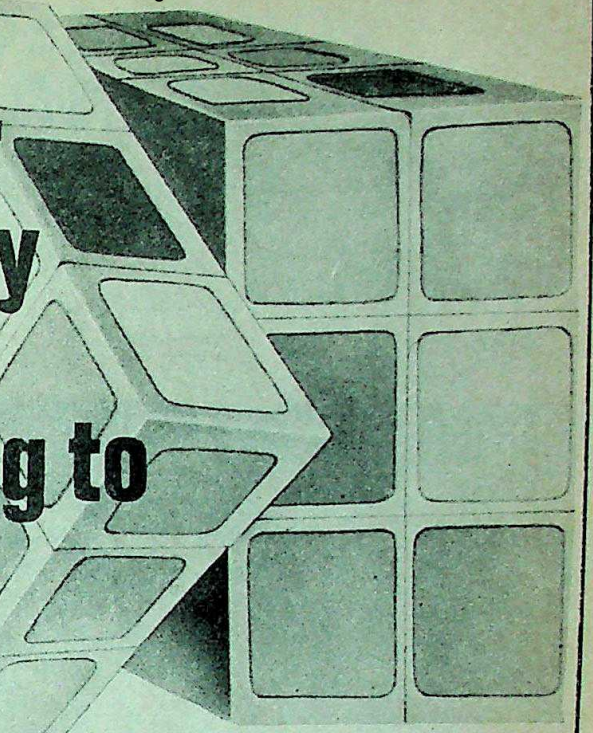

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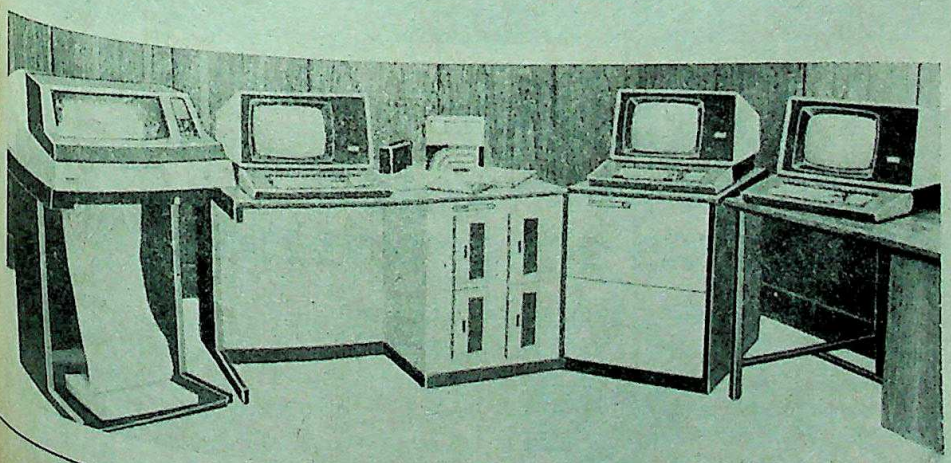

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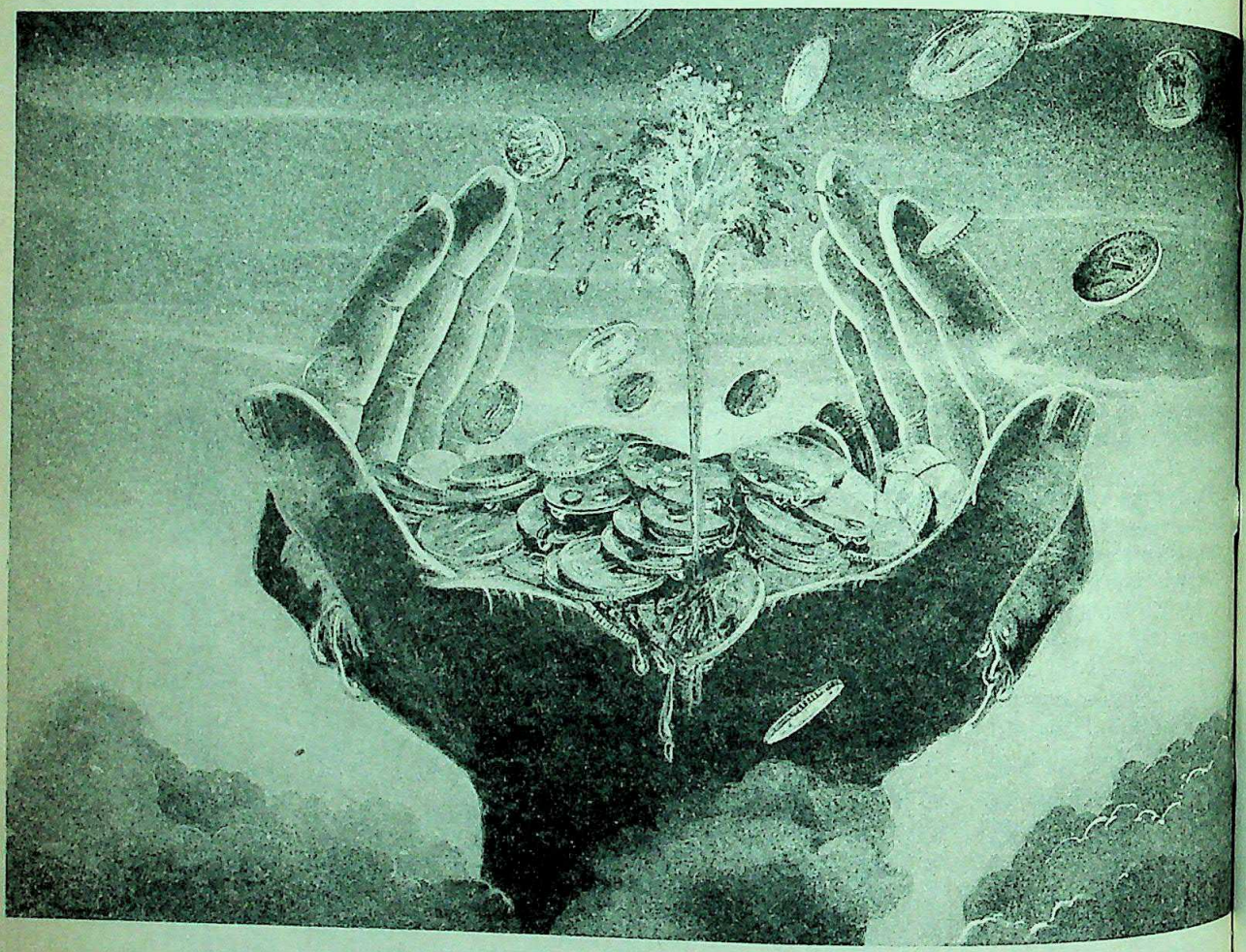

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HARYANA

Swami's Disneyland

SWAMI Dhirendra Brahmachari may be better known for his obsession with spreading the gospel of yoga, but beneath that bare-chested exterior there beats the heart of an entrepreneur. The high-flying Swami is currently involved with what promises to be his most spectacular and ambitious project yet—a yoga centre, an amusement park and a wildlife sanctuary all rolled into one that, in the Brahmachari's own words, will rival Disneyland.

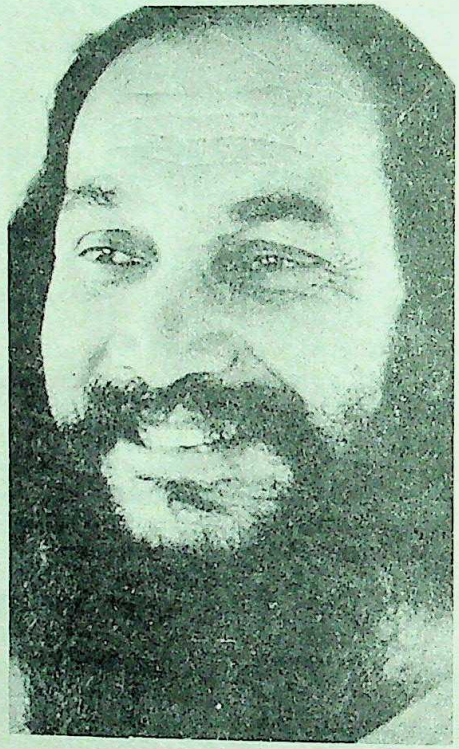
The politically-connected Swami has outlined his grandiose scheme in a letter to Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal as that is the state he has picked for the project. Specifically, the rolling Aravalli hills just beyond the border town of Gurgaon and about 50 km from New Delhi.

Ambitious Plans: The Brahmachari's letter to Bhajan Lal spells out the dimensions of the project. "We propose," says the letter, "to establish a big health and recreation centre in your prestigious state of Haryana. The centre will include a yoga research and training centre, a wildlife sanctuary, folk arts, crafts, amusement centre and other facilities such as helipad, aquarium, planetarium and games and thrillers (*sic*)."

To dispel any doubts about the efficacy of the rather varied fare being offered, the letter deviates into the Swami's particular brand of philosophy. "The fundamental aim of recreation and amusement," the Brahmachari explains, "is to make a person relax and give him a feeling of complete ease and composure. This is very essential to keep one's mind diverted from the stresses and strains of the fast pace of present-day life." Waxing even more eloquent, the Swami continues his hard sell to Bhajan Lal thus: "The proposed centre will be a monument of its own, an institution to itself and befitting tribute dedicated to our nation in bringing some leisure in life and life in leisure."

To hammer home the point, the letter also mentions that: "The lack of such facilities and adequate outlet for bubbling human energy finds vent in subversive and mischievous activities capable of sublimating their natural instinct is an important factor for the phenomenal increase in India's population . . . ."

What exactly will be Haryana's contribution towards Dhirendra Brahmachari's scheme for solving the population problem and curbing subversive elements in terms of land? According to the letter, for a start, the Swami has made a modest request for 5,000 acres of land. But that, as the letter clearly implies, is only a start. "The centre will continuously grow with time in its picturesque surroundings," says the Brahmachari and cites the example of Walt Disney's famous Disneyland to emphasise the fact that there is no point in being niggardly when a project of this magnitude is involved. As he says: "Walt Disney, who created his wonderland in 1955 in just 70 acres, has today Disney World in approximately 27,500 acres."

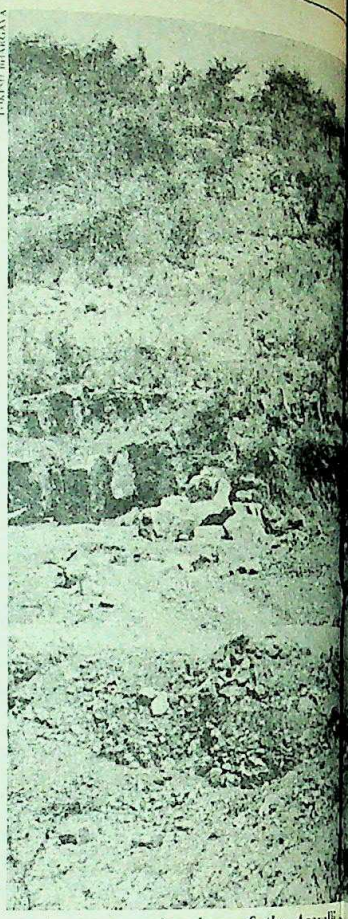


The high-flying Swami is currently involved with what promises to be his most spectacular and ambitious project yet—a yoga centre, an amusement park and a wildlife sanctuary all rolled into one that, in the Brahmachari's own words, will rival Disneyland.

Quick Action: Some indication of the Swami's expansion plans lies in the fact that patwaris of Haryana villages on either side of the Aravalli range have been asked by tehsildars to prepare maps of the panchayat [illegible] villages, inclu[illegible] Maps are also being drawn up of those [illegible] tions which are under private own[illegible] The total area shown on the maps is wel[illegible] 10,000 acres and should the entire ra[illegible] brought under the scheme, as is cur[illegible] indicated, the total area should wind [illegible] the region of 70,000 acres.

As usually happens in [illegible] jects where the Brahmach[illegible] involved, events have [illegible] with bewildering rapidity. [illegible] Brahmachari's letter to B[illegible] Lal was sent on Septe[illegible] last year. The chief minister [illegible] warded it to the Gu[illegible] deputy commissioner w[illegible] standard bureaucratic [illegible] "for necessary action". A[illegible] immediately, S.P. Ma[illegible] close associate of the S[illegible] was taken on a tour of the prospective [illegible] Mittal first asked for the land around [illegible] Bhondsi village but the sarpanch [illegible] vetoed the idea since it involved [illegible] farmland. Instead, he suggested th[illegible] along the Aravalli range be "donated [illegible] Brahmachari.

Meanwhile, block development [illegible] have already approached the sarpanch[illegible]



A panoramic view of the Aravalli [illegible]

[illegible] and (inset) Chi[illegible]

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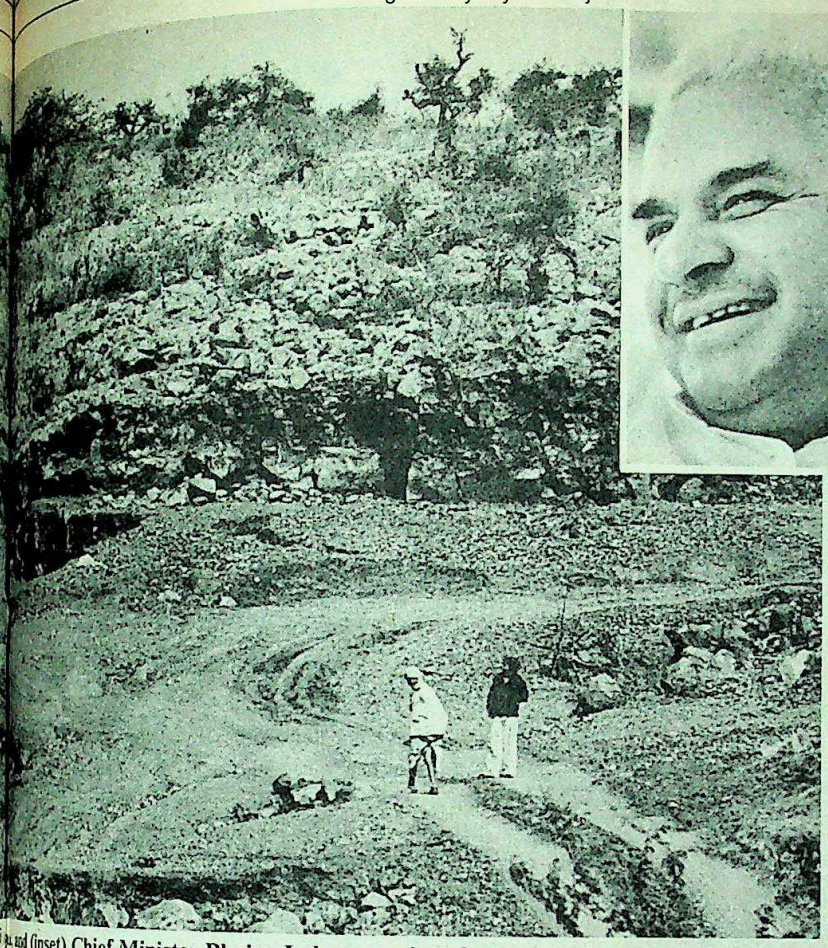
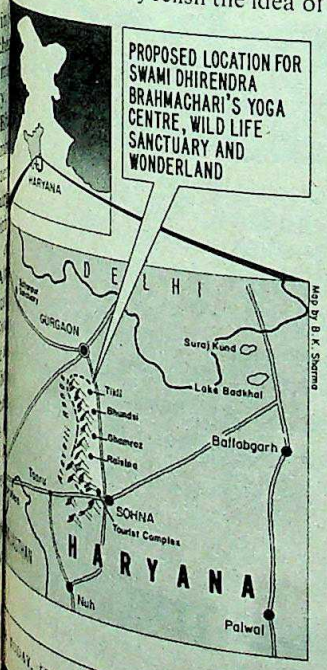


of the Aravalli ... and (inset) Chief Minister Bhajan Lal: expansion plans

f the panchayat ... villages, including Tikli, Gairatpur ... rawn up of those ... Bhondsi, Ghamroz and Gangwani and ... r private owners ... that the panchayats meet and pass ... n the maps is well ... tion donating the village land to the ... d the entire ra ... chari through the Haryana Govern- ... heme, as is cu ... Naturally, the sarpanches are caught ... a should wind ... t stick. They hardly relish the idea of ... cres.



giving up their grazing land and their main source of revenue for free. At the same time, they are equally hesitant about antagonising the "sarkar".

High Feelings: The feeling running through the affected villages is one of angry resignation. To them, the Brahmachari's scheme is not viewed in terms of a benefit to the nation but as a blatant case of land grab. "It is a different matter if they are going to take the land forcibly but who in his right mind would part with his land willingly," asked a village elder who understandably asked to remain anonymous. But so far, their only weapon is to try and stall the inevitable for as long as possible.

The sarpanches, who were shown copies of the Brahmachari's letter and asked to donate the land as a "national service", have now asked for the request to be made in writing. Most of the village headmen approached so far are waiting for the sarpanch of Bhondsi, Om Pal Singh Raghav, who was the first to be asked, to make the initial move. Says Raghav: "I told the officers that I would call a meeting of the gram sabha and inform them of the collective village decision. I convened the meeting last month but unfortunately there was no quorum. So we will just have to hold another meeting soon."

It appears, however, that they will have no choice but to oblige. The Gurgaon administration has already forwarded the proposal to acquire the privately-owned land which falls under the area to the state capital in Chandigarh. Meanwhile, the Brahmachari himself was unusually reticent about his project. When contacted, he sounded peeved that the media had got wind of the scheme: "What is the point of talking to newsmen and giving details when you only want to use my name so that your magazine can sell more. In India, people will not allow any worthwhile project to be carried out."

Rapid Expansion: But not, apparently, as far as the Brahmachari is concerned. The Swami's Aparna Ashram, headquartered in Jammu, which will be in charge of the project, is expanding pretty rapidly itself. Plans to expand the ashram's projects over the next seven years are already underway at an estimated cost of Rs 21.79 crore. The projects have been exempted from income tax by the Indian Council of Scientific Research. Two other yoga centres have been opened at Jammu and Chanpura in Bihar. In Delhi, the Brahmachari's Central Institute for Yoga is also under expansion. Last year, Delhi's Master Plan was amended so that an additional 2.75 acres of government land in the heart of the capital could be added to the existing two acres. Interestingly, very little of the original plot given to the centre has been built upon.

But the Swami's Disneyland promises to be his biggest project yet. In his letter to Bhajan Lal, he visualises that "at least 10,000 people on weekdays and 20,000 on Sundays will visit the Haryana centre. Even assuming that an average Indian visitor (leaving aside the foreign tourist) would spend between Rs 5 and Rs 10 during the visit, the phenomenal impact on the overall economy of the district and the state can be well visualised. This centre will be one of the most sought after attractions not only in India but in the whole world. In a nutshell, it would be a milestone in the developing state of Haryana."

With the Brahmachari's hard sell and the propensity of state governments to bend over backwards as far as he is concerned, the new Disneyland looks certain to become reality. But what equally certain is that one group of people who will not be enjoying its myriad attractions will be the poor farmers and villagers of Aravalli who will have to give up their land. All in the national interest, of course.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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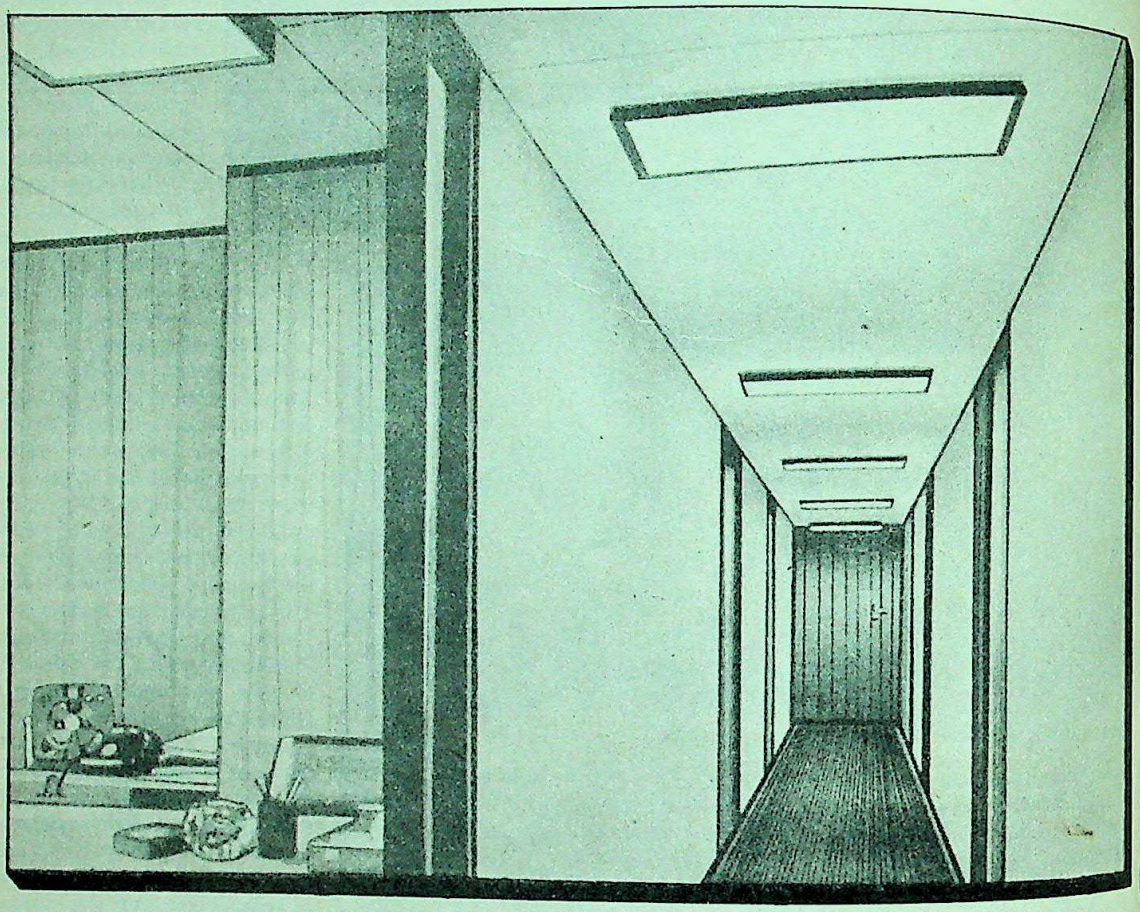

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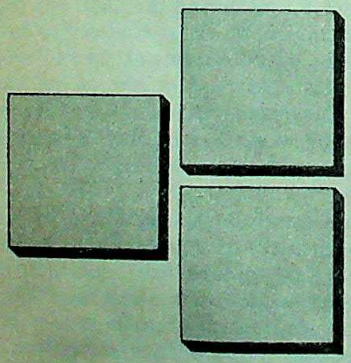

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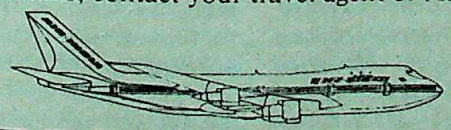

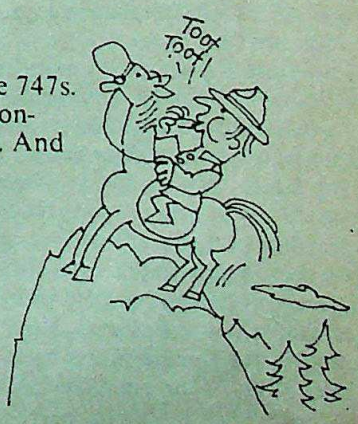

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NUCLEAR POLICY

Jitters Of Ziatomics

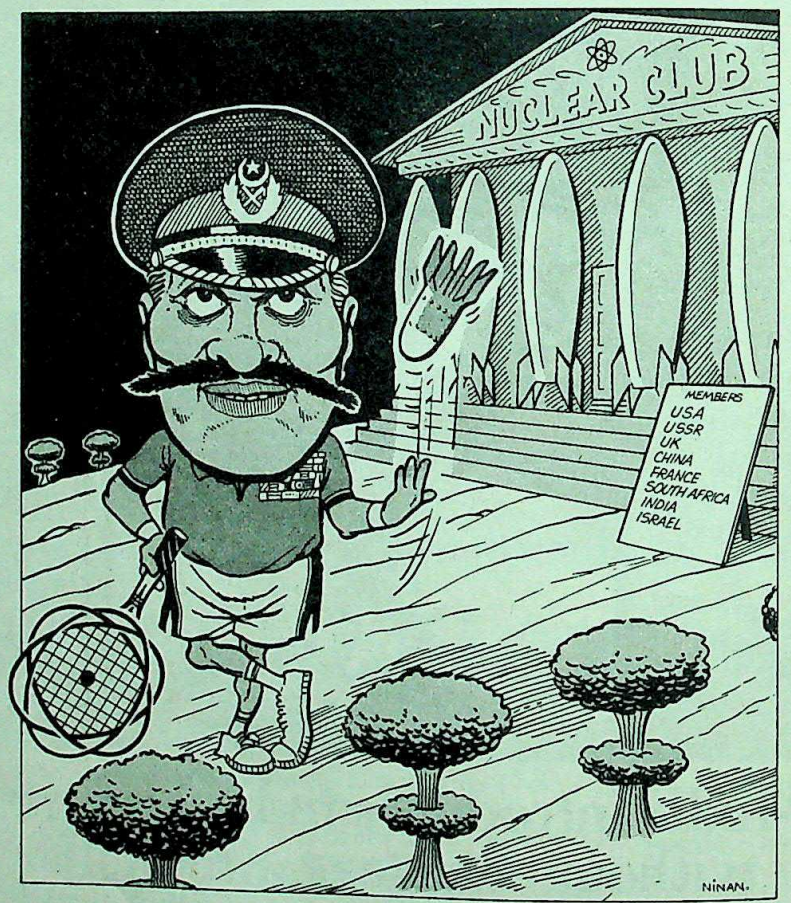
REAGATOMICS and Ziatomics are the two looming perils of the 1980s. Reagatomics—the devil-may-care policy of the Reagan Administration to prepare the United States and the world for an actual nuclear war—threatens to break up the Atlantic alliance. Ziatomics—General Zia-ul-Haq's reported resolve to blast a nuclear device and then proceed to build nuclear weapons—keeps India continuously on tenterhooks. The difference between Reagatomics and Ziatomics is that the Reagan Administration's ferocious nuclear teeth stand frighteningly bare to the world, whereas Ziatomics is wrapped in Pakistani secrecy, international rumours and Indian suspicion (beneath which lie layers and layers of Indian desire for the Bomb).

"The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything but our thinking," groaned Einstein many years ago, "thus, we are drifting toward a catastrophe beyond comparison." In the northern half of the planet, Reagatomics is not all darkness without a silver lining: millions of people and hundreds of defence experts and statesmen are fighting to arrest the drift to nuclear war before it's too late. But there is no anti-nuclear movement either in Pakistan or in India.

Ominous Reports: The world has been waiting breathlessly for years for Ziatomics to deliver its first awesome offspring: a Pakistani nuclear blast. Now, in January 1983, reports have appeared in responsible American newspapers that China has given Pakistan the design or the know-how to make the Bomb and that General Zia may not risk the cutting off of US military and economic aid by undertaking a blast. It just doesn't matter that the report has been stoutly denied by both China and Pakistan. The report is said to have come first from British intelligence sources, and then to have been checked by American intelligence or the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

An official spokesman in Washington deliberately prolonged the suspense by refusing to deny the report, by even refusing to tell reporters whether Secretary of State George Schultz would make it clear to the Chinese leaders that they wouldn't get any cooperation from the US in the nuclear field if they wished to pass on high-grade nuclear know-how to Pakistan. Both the mass media and the Administration in the United States evidently have determined to keep Ziatomics alive. At the same time, American spokesmen have repeatedly affirmed that the US wouldn't allow Pakistan to go nu[illegible] And as far as Americans are concerned, there is no difference [illegible]tween a nuclear "device" peacefully exploded, and experim[illegible] with nuclear weapons.

There have been many other reports of the Pakistani B[illegible] a-coming. Invariably, they have emanated from British, French [illegible] American sources. In 1979-80, the CIA predicted a Pakistani nu[illegible] explosion by the end of 1982. But in the second half of last ye[illegible] "secret" CIA report was leaked to the American press. Conceding the earlier report was wrong, the new report said that Pakistan w[illegible] attain nuclear capability—that is, explode a device—"within the[illegible] three years".



Explaining the [illegible] the report added that P[illegible]tan was unlikely to com[illegible] an explosion before [illegible] transfer of all the 40 p[illegible] fighters promised by [illegible] Reagan Administra[illegible] under the 1981 package [illegible] It also suggested that the [illegible]kistani leaders were afra[illegible] a "pre-emptive" Indian [illegible]tack on its nuclear inst[illegible]tions. This revised CIA re[illegible] was immediately follo[illegible] by a report drawn up by [illegible] US Air Force on the ba[illegible] its own aerial and [illegible] intelligence. This one de[illegible]red a more comfortable [illegible]diction: the Pakistani B[illegible] will come only in 2000.

Intelligence Estim[illegible]

It is doubtful if the In[illegible] Government has learn[illegible] can learn, much about [illegible]kistan's nuclear doings [illegible] its own intelligence sou[illegible] However, several powe[illegible] closely monitoring the [illegible]kistani nuclear progra[illegible] and some of them, inc[illegible] the US and the S[illegible] Union, appear to be [illegible] New Delhi informed [illegible] Government has some[illegible] echoed CIA predictions. For instance, an official spokesman di[illegible] on April 27, 1982 the "disquieting information" that "Pa[illegible] might carry out a nuclear explosion any time between July an[illegible] tember at a site near the Rann of Kutch". The Government [illegible] react to the Washington Post report that China had passed on [illegible]kistan the design of a nuclear bomb. But others did. They have [illegible] the Government to take the report seriously, and get ready [illegible] own appropriate response: the Indian Bomb.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Pakistan has been try[illegible] fast as it can, since 1975, to get on par with India in nuclear cap[illegible] —that is, to explode a device. Nor is there any doubt that the [illegible] very powerful bomb lobby in Pakistan, perhaps as vocal a[illegible]

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the bomb lobby in India. Pakistan's ability to acquire from international nuclear blackmarket the essential infrastructure of weapons-capable nuclear programme took the nuclear powers by surprise. Since Pakistan's programme is being funded in part by Saudi Arabia and Libya, and since many Pakistanis have openly talked of an "Islamic dimension" for their nuclear weapons, Ziatomics is seen in Israel as a potential threat to the security, even survival, of the Jewish state. The world-wide, very resourceful Zionist lobby therefore takes an exaggerated view of Pakistan's nuclear programme.

IN INDIA, as in the West, there are contradictory estimates of where Pakistan actually stands with its nuclear programme. The Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), Dr H.N. Sethna, said in October last that Pakistan had neither the industrial infrastructure necessary for producing an atomic bomb nor "the resources and capable brains" for that purpose, hastening to add, however, that "I am in a minority".

Strategic analysts at the hawkish Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), on the other hand, believe that Pakistan is very close to having the capability to make nuclear weapons, if it has not crossed that stage already. They also seem to believe that Pakistan has the political will to explode a nuclear device, if not to make nuclear weapons. However, there are shades of difference among the experts on the actual state of Pakistan's nuclear programme. K. Subrahmanyam, the institute's director, is somewhat more positive about Pakistan's expected nuclear blast than R. Subramaniam (another expert) who believes that Pakistan has several technological problems to surmount before it can undertake a blast.

A National Seminar on Indian Security, held in New Delhi last year took a more cautious view. It is possible, according to a position paper written for the seminar, that "Pakistan might not explicitly demonstrate its nuclear capability at least until 1987, when the full impact of $3.2 billion US assistance to Pakistan runs its full course. It would be safe to assume, also, that Pakistan will be some sort of nuclear power by the turn of the decade."

Contrary Views: A very different view is taken by another strategic analyst, Ravi Rikhye. According to Rikhye, Pakistan is 15 years behind India with its nuclear programme and is not close to the bomb "for purely technical reasons". In a position paper prepared for a seminar held last year under the auspices of the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, on India's nuclear policy options, he observed that though Pakistan is certainly trying to make the bomb, it has not yet managed to lay the basis for a nuclear weapons programme, and will not be able to make the bomb for "many years".

In the context of these contradictory assessments, where does the report that China has resolved Pakistan's technological problems by presenting it with the bomb design? The report strains credulity for a variety of reasons. In the first place, why should China pass on the bomb design to Pakistan? In return for what? Since the making of the first atomic bomb, only one country has passed on the bomb design to another country—the United States to Britain. And for very good reason: British scientists had helped the Americans make the first nuclear bombs and knew the secret anyway. Pakistan in no way contributed to China's entirely self-reliant nuclear programme. China has consistently refused to conclude a security alliance with Pakistan and has no formal obligation to defend Pakistan from any external attack.

The Chinese may not swear as loudly as the Americans by the theology of non-proliferation. But there is no reason to believe that they would enjoy witnessing Pakistan blast its way into the nuclear club—if only because the Chinese know that a Pakistani blast would trigger an Indian decision to go nuclear, and it is not exactly congenial to China's security to have two large nuclear powers, the USSR and India, confronting it along most of its land frontiers.

Furthermore, the Chinese leaders realise that transfer of high-grade nuclear technology to Pakistan would mean spoiling friendly ties not only with the United States but also its West European allies. Since China is highly interested in importing sophisticated dual-purpose technology from the US and Western Europe, it is all the more incredible that it would jeopardise its relations with the West by taking recourse to such a foolish and profitless measure as handing over to Pakistan the technical secrets of making the bomb.

Warnings: Why should, then, these baseless reports appear in the US and West European press at regular intervals? For more than one good reason: The United States is determined to see that Pakistan does not make a nuclear blast or nuclear weapons. Israel is even more determined to ensure both. Reports of an imminent Pakistani blast thus keep all the agencies of the US Government alert. Congress is alerted to threaten a cut-off of annual instalments of the aid package each time an "intelligence report" predicts an on-coming Pakistani blast. These reports serve as warnings to the rulers of Pakistan that they must not proceed towards blasting a device. The messages signalled are clear: when a CIA report says Pakistan is afraid of an Indian pre-emptive attack, it in fact warns Pakistan of an assured Israeli pre-emptive assault.

These alarms are meant to alert the Indian Government of the imminent danger of a nuclear race between Pakistan and India. They signal a message: why doesn't India put its signature on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) so that Pakistan can also be made to do so, and the region is rid of the devastating menace of a nuclear race? That message falls on deaf ears.

But there is also another purpose behind these false alarms which Indians are unwilling to acknowledge in public. These alarms are meant to alert the Indian Government of the imminent danger of a nuclear race between Pakistan and India. They signal a message: why doesn't India put its signature on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) so that Pakistan can also be made to do so, and the region is rid of the devastating menace of a nuclear race? That message falls on deaf ears. India will not abandon its nuclear option. Nor, therefore, will Pakistan. If India can live with a nuclear China, why can't Pakistan live with an India that has only blasted a device but hasn't made, nor proposes to make, nuclear weapons?

Because, as Einstein grimly pointed out, the unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except man's thinking. "We shall require a new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive," the great sage had forewarned. Seedlings of a new manner of thinking that could still save human civilisation seem to be hopefully sprouting, at last, at the grass roots in America and Europe. But of these new stirrings the earth in the subcontinent is barren. Here, Ziatomics is the Strangelovian hero of a scary drama: a junior brother of Reagatomics, death-dancing on the global stage.

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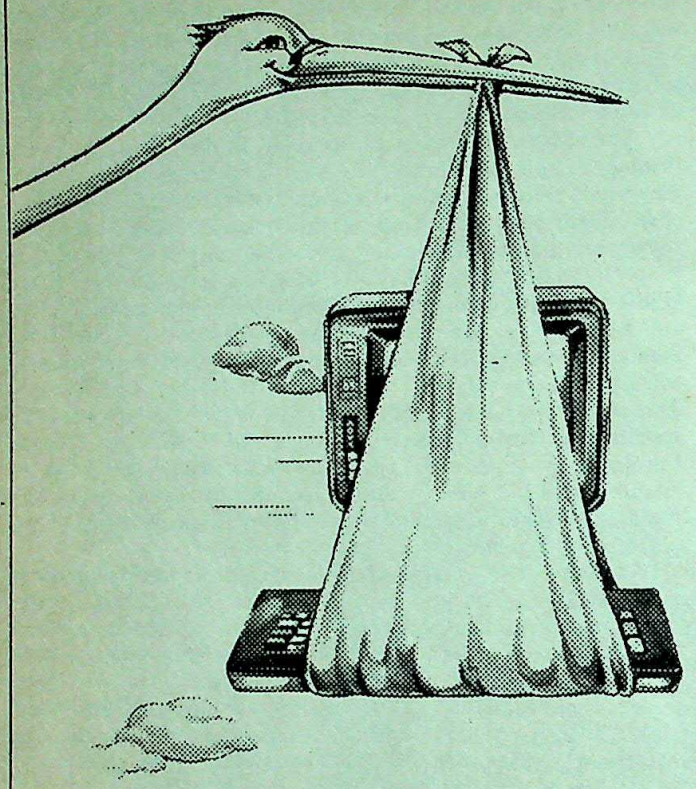

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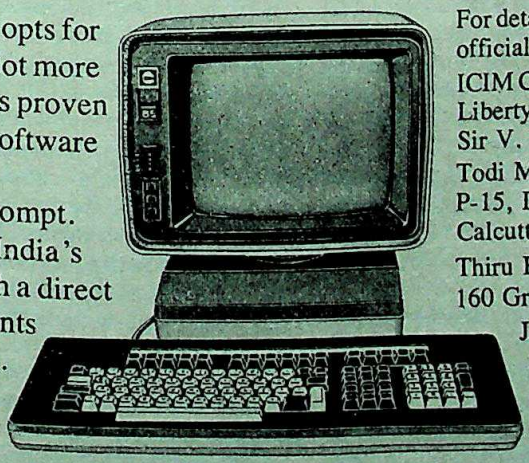

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SINO-SOVIET TIES

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The Hammer And Sickle

A SENIOR Chinese official, Huan Xiang, recently declared in an interview with the Japanese newspaper, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, that there are four identifiable relationships between states: that of friends, that of enemies, that of nations that are neither friends nor enemies, and that of potential enemies that outwardly maintain friendly relations. "I do not know myself," Xiang was quoted as saying, "which of these four kinds of relationships the United States believes it is maintaining with China." In recent months US officials have been echoing similar sentiments about China. Relations between the two unlikely partners in the world-wide struggle against Soviet "designs" are clearly at a crossroads.

Beijing's nose is out of joint over Washington's continuing arms agreements with Taiwan. And Washington is clearly unnerved over the recent Sino-Soviet dialogue that could produce a thaw in the two-decade-old new cold war between the world's two communist behemoths. Secretary of State George Shultz's visit to Beijing last fortnight did little to ease the strains that have developed in Sino-American ties. But it sent signals to the rest of the world—especially the Soviet Union—that the two nations take their relations with each other seriously and that neither will risk taking precipitous action that could do irrevocable damage to the ties they have developed since Mao and Nixon signed the Shanghai communique.

What may emerge ultimately from the Sino-Soviet peace moves is anybody's guess. The exercise could well be no more than geopolitical shadow-dancing. But American officials and politicians are clearly worried over the Sino-Soviet dialogue that began to gain momentum in early 1982 after almost 20 years of rivalry.

What may emerge ultimately from the Sino-Soviet peace moves is anybody's guess. The exercise could well be no more than geopolitical shadow-dancing. But American officials and politicians are clearly worried over the Sino-Soviet dialogue that began to gain momentum in early 1982 after almost 20 years of intense rivalry.

Breakthrough: The first shot in the battle of reconciliation was fired by Leonid Brezhnev in March 1982 when, during a speech in Tashkent, he expressed support for China's "socialist social system", and to Beijing's claim to sovereignty over "existing border questions". The late Soviet leader followed through by asking the Soviet press to tone down criticism of China. China responded by its now familiar ping-pong diplomacy—easing restrictions on cultural and sports exchanges with the USSR. By October, China agreed to resume bilateral negotiations that had been stalled since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister L.I. Ilyichev and his Chinese counterpart Oian Qichen began talks in Beijing and agreed to consult on a regular basis in both communist capitals. But neither side indicated that a breakthrough was imminent or even desirable under present conditions.

Brezhnev's death in November produced the opportunity for the highest level Sino-Soviet dialogue in more than a decade. Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua, who led his country's delegation to the funeral, met with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko for 90 minutes on November 16. That the two communist giants who had been going at each other hammer and sickle for the last 20 years may be willing to pick up an olive branch or two were driven home vividly to the American delegation to the funeral by Yuri Andropov. During a reception for foreign officials the new Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) general secretary went out of his way to greet Huang Hua and chatted with him for several moments while other guests including US Vice-President George Bush and George Shultz waited way behind in line.

In both academic and official American circles there are two distinct and opposing views about the effects of Sino-Soviet détente—one sanguine, the other alarmist. The alarmists prevail. Those who regard the Sino-Soviet dialogue with equanimity—prominent among them is A. Doak Barnett of the John Hopkins School of International Studies—stress the importance of China to the US for its own sake rather than as an ally against global competition against the Soviets. They think it highly unlikely that an anti-American Sino-Soviet axis will ever develop. On the contrary they believe that China's interest in maintaining Asian stability will not change. In fact, they see an accommodation in Soviet-Chinese relations over trouble spots such as Indo-China, Afghanistan and the Sino-Soviet border as easing the danger of a nuclear war, reducing great power rivalry in Asia and fostering economic growth in the region—of which are in the interests of the US. Furthermore, this school of thought sees Beijing's accommodation with Moscow and a more independent foreign policy as a gain for America in its competition with the Soviet Union. Beijing's new independence would improve its standing with the Third World, the non-aligned movement, and the United Nations thereby allowing China to speak more effectively against Soviet positions in these forums where the US has little or no influence.

China has also built up impressive foreign exchange reserves. As of June 1982, Beijing had $7.2 billion (Rs 750 crore) in foreign reserves which it would like to spend on technology transfer, coproduction arrangements and weapons from the West. "Improved dialogue with the USSR," an unpublished congressional research service study says "would allow Chinese leaders to neutralize through political channels possible hostile Soviet reactions in the event that Beijing chooses to spend its foreign exchange on Western technology and arms."

Changing Strategies: But American alarmists see red, not pink, in the Moscow-Beijing scenario. The Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s was a clear strategic advantage to the US. It came at a time when the US was faced with a massive and unsuccessful involvement in Vietnam, a debilitating political battle within the US against the war and the growth of Soviet military power. Survival and realpolitik dictated that the Americans exploit the Sino-Soviet split to extricate themselves from the war, give the US political leverage over the Soviet Union while continuing to maintain a favourable balance in Asian and world affairs. As Colonel James Robert Martin of

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of Security Affairs put it: "The Shanghai Communique and subsequent improvement in the US-China relations which follo- ended the era of confrontation with China, freeing US re- and providing us greater flexibility in our global security Improved US-China relations also increased Soviet con- about what they view as a two-front security problem and the US and China each to consider the other a strategic weight to the Soviets."

According to several studies a Sino-Soviet detente would of four major elements: establishment of high-level secret party ties, and efforts to collaborate on sensitive issues Israel and South Africa; acquiescence by both parties to claims along the frontier as well as to non-aggression war pacts; massive, low-cost technical and economic aid from the Soviet Union; and China giving a Nelson's eye of Soviet expansion abroad such as military pressures a post-Khomeini Iran. These developments would dash all hopes for a more active military collaboration with give Moscow more flexibility to exert influence in the Pacific or Persian Gulf, reduce China's tolerance for policies contrary to Chinese interests such as in and lead to political upheaval in America because the of American foreign policy during the last decade, the benefits of closer Sino-American relations, would be int- discredited. But all this, of course, is in the realm of Whether a significant Sino-Soviet detente will occur based on the outcome of several international cost-benefit that the Soviet and Chinese leaderships will have to their politico-economic pocket calculators.

That there has been a real and dis- shift in Beijing's attitude toward is in little doubt. But this "shift" is part of a broader reorientation of foreign policy which is reverting theory of three worlds which that the main threat to world peace from the competition of super- for international "hegemony". It represents Beijing's desire to move to a more non-aligned, Third World- position. Thus, while China has its criticism of Third World which have close ties to Moscow and has tried to im- relations with the pro-Moscow French Communist Party Soviet-backed Angola, it has been critical of American poli- Korea, the Middle East, South Africa, and Latin America. specialists say that China is wooing Soviets because of its with Uncle Sam. The Reagan Administration has to treat China as a "junior partner" in their relationship. the Chinese believe that US economic and political against the Soviets are maladroit, haphazard and in- as demonstrated by the Reagan administration's about the embargo of grain sales to the USSR and the restric- Western sales for the new Soviet gas pipeline.

Expediency: But a better explanation, offered by several experts, is that China's "shift" toward a more in- line is based on good, old-fashioned expediency. A research service paper recently provided the fol- analysis: "China's economic modernization programme is China's economy, such as energy, Western technology will have a reduced role in China's more sober plans over the next five years. Slowdown in growth has also slowed down military modernization. China's economy starts to perk, its leaders will not invest in a major military upgrading and must rely on increasingly inadequate equipment to defend against growing Soviet power. As a result, Chinese leaders are thought to be reluctant to move into a closer relationship with the US that might seriously antagonise the USSR, unless there were major offsetting benefits for China."

The Soviet *démarche* toward China, according to several experts, is also based on the Soviet Union's internal compulsions. There has been a large turnover in top-level Soviet leaders most of whom have or will enter politics in the more moderate post-Stalin atmosphere. And among the myriad of problems they confront, the seriously declining Soviet economy is the major one. The new Soviet leadership is said to believe that for minor tactical gains in places like Angola, the horn of Africa, Indo-China and Afghanistan it has overcommitted itself to marginally useful clients at the expense of unceasing opposition from the West and the Third World. It seems logical, therefore, that facing severe economic constraints as well as a loss of political clout in the Third World, the Soviets would want to reach accommodation with China. And the character of the Sino-Soviet rivalry has changed. It is no longer based on personalities as was the case during the Mao-Khruschev era. No longer does China accuse the Soviets of having abandoned the great goal of world communism and replaced it with a self-serving "goulash" socialism.

Three major issues keep the two sides apart:

► Military confrontation: Massive Soviet armed strength now confronts the Chinese on their border. During the '70s, Soviet forces opposite China rose from about 150,000 troops, from 20 to well over 40 divisions.

► Border disputes: The Chinese insist that Czarist Russia and the Soviet Union illegally occupied certain territories including regions of the Pamir Mountains, and several hundred islands in the Amur and Ussuri river. For 13 years bilateral talks have produced nothing but stalemates.

► China feels threatened and surrounded by what it sees to be an advancing and insatiable Soviet power military build-up in the north, a build-up of Soviet navy forces in the pacific in the East, military bases in Vietnam in the South, and an occupation army in Afghanistan adjacent to Xinjiang, China's most vulnerable province in the West.

Hua (left) and Gromyko: olive branch

Both the Soviets and the Chinese have competed heavily for economic and political influence in the Asian region. And herein lies the rub. If a true accommodation occurs between Moscow and Beijing it could cause a chain reaction among their respective Asian allies who would seek similar accommodations with each other. This would upset the Asian balance of power, the status quo which both Beijing and Moscow want to maintain in the interest of their own security.

It is unlikely that a Sino-Soviet detente based on strong economic and trade ties will occur. The two countries simply don't have much of what the other wants. Both export petroleum, both import foodstuffs, neither produces much rubber, and both have a surfeit of non-ferrous metals. And even though the Soviets export steel, China finds it more convenient to buy its steel from Japan.

United States intelligence planners have been advising the administration to react cautiously and with good sense. The recommendations include: not taking any strong action to radical high-level visits to Beijing, easing bilateral tensions by reassuring Beijing about Taiwan, granting easier access to Chinese textiles in American markets, downplaying the importance of the "triangular relationship" and the maintenance of US military forces in south Asia

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CANADA

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Home Sikhness

TRADITIONALLY, Sikh politics in Canada have been governed by those who control the community's halls of hope, faith and charity. It has largely been a conservative affair, with the antennas of those at the helm of the power pinnacle abroad tuned in to the political parties back home in Punjab.

However, all this has been undergoing radical changes with the emergence of liberal elements, particularly in large cities like Toronto and Vancouver, who demand that the ideological base be dichotomised to better suit the needs of the adherents of Sikhism in Canada. Often this confrontation between the old guards and liberals has led to open shouting matches, street brawls and acts of violence.

But, in the past few years, in addition to sectarian infighting among members of Indo-Canadian Sikhs, a new dimension has been added to the already tenuous situation by way of the stand taken by rival groups on the issue of Khalistan. There are those in acute minority who openly demand the carving out of a separate homeland for their people out of what is now Punjab; others who are opposed to this viewpoint and advocate moderation; and most of all those who say that the issue is best left to the political parties in India.

Mass Migration: Until the spring and summer of 1981, the voice of pro-Khalistan elements was like a cry in the wilderness. Then came the sudden influx of more than 2,000 Sikhs seeking political asylum in Canada, claiming oppression and brutality at the hands of Mrs Gandhi's Government. Immigration authorities in the country were exasperated at this unprecedented inflow of refugee status seekers, most of them either victims of machinations by unscrupulous travel agents or out to exploit the loopholes in the laws, and Ottawa clamped down visas on all visitors from India—the first ever such restriction against nationals of a member Commonwealth country.

The pro-Khalistan Sikhs in Canada have, however, not given up hope on legitimising their claims. Even though there are only a handful of these activists, they have been trying to build support for their cause by exploiting any situation that comes their way.

Last April, moments after an Ontario Supreme Court judge dissented with the plainstiff to grant an injunction to prevent impending elections to the Toronto Pape Avenue gurudwara, the infighting between hard-line and moderate nationalist Sikhs, led to the brutal murder of two people in the court room (INDIA TODAY, April 30, 1982). One man was also left seriously wounded and has been paralysed for life. The alleged killer, Kuldip Singh Samra, has been absconding since then, despite one of the most massive man-hunts launched by the Canadian Police in cooperation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States.

Khalistan Supporters: In May last, during one of his periodic visits to Vancouver, the then high commissioner for India, Dr Gurdial Singh Dhillon, was pelted with rotten tomatoes and eggs as soon as he stepped inside the international airport. Dhillon had to be whisked away from the scene by men of the security force amidst pro-Khalistan slogan shouting, but no charges have ever been laid against the miscreants. It was a media event that focussed public attention on the Khalistan problem.

Toronto police arrest a Sikh demonstrator: distant drums

Canadian federal and provincial authorities have made no secret of the fact that they have been gravely concerned with the growth of a pro-Khalistan movement on their soil, particularly among expatriates living in the country.

According to reliable reports, Sikhs seeking a separate Khalistan have set up organisational bases in Vancouver and Toronto, and have been financing the movement back home in India. The organisers have reportedly been imparting military training to young activists. One Sikh leader in Vancouver said that the training was part of the measures being adopted for pr[illegible] of their businesses and homes agains[illegible] attacks. He would not elaborate on [illegible] the training camps were. An adv[illegible] placed in a leading Vancouver daily [illegible] ted for "mercenary soldiers" to becom[illegible] of a Khalistan fighting force, confi[illegible] fears of the police that the movem[illegible] gaining psychological ground in C[illegible]

Violent Conflict: To cap it all, tw[illegible] groups of Sikhs in Toronto clashed vi[illegible] last November in front of the Indian c[illegible] late offices in the heart of the city. Th[illegible] purportedly staging a peaceful demo[illegible] tion against alleged police brutality a[illegible] the Sikhs in Punjab. The incident left [illegible] people, including a policeman in c[illegible] clothes, with bullet wounds.

According to Sergeant Donald C[illegible] of Toronto Police, the two factions—o[illegible] presenting pro-Khalistan sentiments a[illegible] other moderates counselling more a[illegible] my for Punjab within the framework o[illegible] Indian Constitution—had a[illegible] on the methods of demonstr[illegible] and that included no posters. H[illegible] ever, some of the demonstr[illegible] brought posters, he said, and a[illegible] tercation ensued.

Uncertain Future: While those with bullet wounds have [illegible] released from the hospital [illegible] three of the accused are being [illegible] in police custody without bail [illegible] charges ranging from attem[illegible] murder to possession of a restr[illegible] weapon. If convicted, the m[illegible] charges could carry a life sent[illegible] and the illegal possession of re[illegible] ted weapons charge could lead [illegible] punishment of up to five yea[illegible] jail.

With the Dal Khalsa [illegible] lawed in India and the Akali Dal m[illegible] increasingly militant, support for [illegible] Khalistan movement amongst Sikh[illegible] Canada is likely to get a fillip. Although [illegible] Sikhs in this country appear neutral [illegible] many spurn the Khalistan movement [illegible] fall-out from Punjab politics is not s[illegible] thing that can be brushed under the rug [illegible] long as Sikh politics in Canada re[illegible] wedded to the home-grown power pla[illegible] one can reasonably expect them to be div[illegible] from the realities of what goes on or alle[illegible] goes on in Punjab.

At the best of times, a slight turbu[illegible] in the political climate in Punjab has a [illegible] pling effect on the religious situatio[illegible] Canada. At the worst of times, this [illegible] bulence cannot but end up as a tor[illegible] engulfing some 100,000 Sikhs settl[illegible] Canada for whom their motherland [illegible] always be a home away from home.

—SURESH [illegible]

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SRI LANKA

The Coming Crunch

THE SETTING was deceptively calm. A wide swath of a beach sloping to a lazy breeze stirring an array of colour-flags and an honour guard in crisply ironed out military uniforms formed the backdrop last fortnight when President Junius Richard Jayawardene, 76, was sworn in for a second six-year term. If a seaside general, at precisely one minute past eight in the morning of Independence Day, February 4, was appropriate enough for an old republic, it also diverted attention, fortuitously enough, from pressing problems looming over the event.

For once, talk in the Lankan capital was not about the Tamil separatists in the north, who organised a successful Jaffna bandh on the day before and the next day blew up a government jeep injuring its occupants. Nor was it about the country's fragmented opposition parties who boycotted the swearing in and Independence Day celebrations. Paradoxically enough, the problems looming at the start of Jayawardene's second term are a result of the very successes that marked his first: the near-total power he and his United National Party (UNP) has come to enjoy with 143 out of Parliament's 168 seats and the stupendous economic growth he has injected into a once sluggish economy during his five years in office.

On the surface, Jayawardene could easily be in a happier position:

Last October, calling a snap presidential election originally due in February 1984, the President romped home polling nearly 53 per cent of the vote, trouncing his main opponent, Hector Kobbekaduwa of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) who gathered 39 per cent.

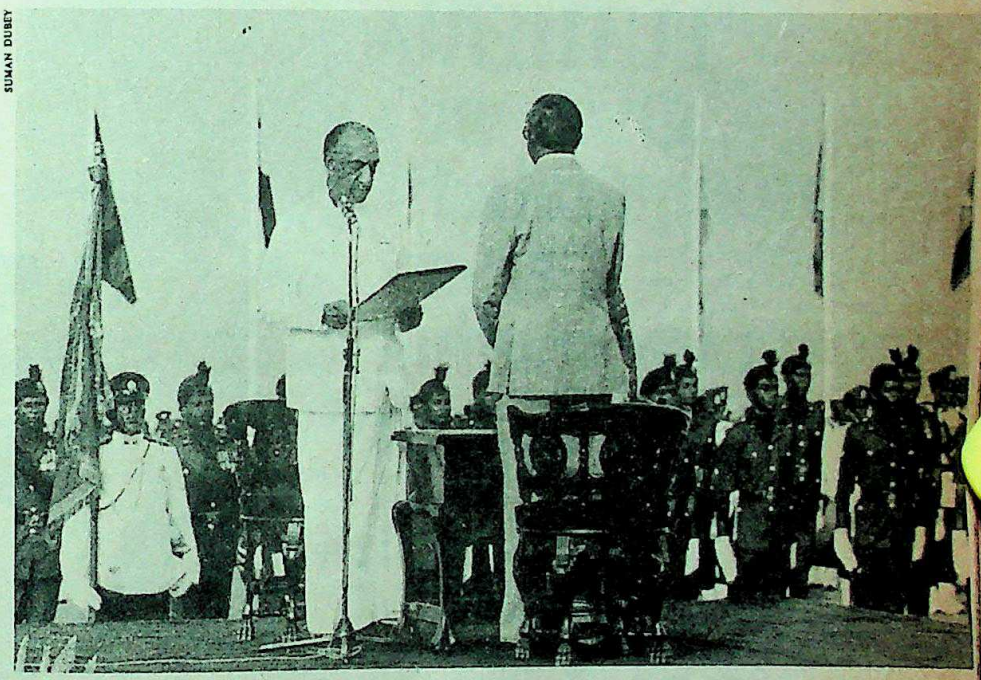
In December, more than half of those who gave him a thumbs up signal in a referendum in which he sought a popular mandate to extend the life of the UNP-dominated Parliament by six years to August 1989.

His chief rival, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, in a controversial move two years ago, was stripped of her civic rights and her SLFP lies inactive and divided, with one faction to the political right cosying up with the UNP and the other to her left under government investigation, accused publicly by the President himself of being "Naxalites or insurgents".

Since 1977, the economy has been thrown open to foreign investment and aid, economic growth has more than doubled to an average 6.5 per cent a year, investment and tourism have trebled, unemployment has declined to 15 per cent from about 25 and ambitious irrigation and agricultural schemes have brought self-sufficiency in food in sight of an economy which in the mid-'70s imported nearly one-third of its needs.

Deficit Financing: But behind this litany, and in large measure because of it, pressures for change are building up. A high-powered team from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) flew home last fortnight after intensive discussions on the state of the economy and prescriptions for the future. Said Gamini Dissanayake, the youthful 41-year-old minister for lands and settlement and one of the key figures in the UNP: "There is very strong pressure on the part of the IMF and World Bank to devalue (the Sri Lankan rupee). We would like to resist that as much as possible." High growth and an open economy have made Sri Lanka something of a showcase, but it has also induced classic problems often associated with these policies. With hardly any domestic industry, the economy has become heavily dependent on imports to fuel its growth, giving it a balance of payments deficit in 1982 estimated at around 22 billion Sri Lankan rupees (Rs 1,100 crore), almost equal to the country's export earnings. Worse, the Government has resorted to massive deficit financing to underwrite its investment programmes to such an extent that the Government's budget deficit for 1982 is expected to be around 20 billion Sri Lankan rupees (Rs 1,000 crore), equal to about half the size of the budgetary spending.

Understandably, talk of devaluation which hit the front pages in Colombo last fortnight, has sparked off a lively debate. With traditional exports like coconut, tea and rubber still dominating the country's foreign exchange earnings, devaluation by itself will be no panacea, but unless both deficits are brought into control, there is little doubt that inflation, currently running at around 15 to 20 per cent, would increase, taking a toll of government popularity. "It is clear that unpopular choices lie ahead of the Government," argues one economist; "1983 is going to be a crunch year."



SUMAN DUBEY

Jayawardene at his swearing-in ceremony: trials ahead

Already the Government has been obliged to slow down its investment programmes to curb its spending. "We've put in virtually no new projects this year," said Dissanayake who is responsible for the ambitious 40 billion Sri Lankan rupees (Rs 2,000 crore) Accelerated Mahaweli Development Programme which aims to harness the water of the Mahaweli Ganga in central Sri Lanka to achieve self-sufficiency in food and power by 1986. But more policy changes are expected and leading bankers, for example, have been urging clients to go slow on new decisions till their direction becomes clear.

Possible Devaluation: In fact, it is widely believed that one of the reasons why Jaya-

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...e went to the electorate twice last year ...clear the decks for difficult economic ...s he knew were being forced on him. ...ing the prospect of devaluation, ...yake said with the refreshing can- ...which is typical of Sri Lankan officials: ...would like to resist it in the full ...ion and belief that we have another ...ar term ahead of us, that we are not ...g precariously."

Devaluation apart, there are other areas ...g for early decisions. The Government ...under considerable pressure to find ...resources at home instead of relying so ...y on foreign aid to finance develop- ... If this means higher taxes and lower ...ies, the decisions will be unpopular but ...ment officials recognise that some- ...g needs to be done to increase domestic ...gs from their present level of 15 per cent ...closer to the high level of investments ...is around 30 per cent of GNP. One ...ity of any reform could be Prime ...ter R. Premadasa's programme to ...one million dwelling units throughout ...ntry, a necessity but also an item of ...nditure which can be put back in tight ...ary times.

While economic development and the ...ity of Jayawardene's policies were ...r issues in the presidential election and ...dam, their main purpose was, of ...e, to prolong the UNP's unshakable ...on national affairs. And, ironically ...h, it was Jayawardene's decision to ...duce proportional representation in the ...constitution that necessitated his move ...ding the life of the existing Parliament ...than go to electorate for a new one.

THE PRESIDENTIAL election showed that in a new Parliament chosen on the basis of proportional representation, the UNP would have got a little ...than half the seats compared with five- ...at present and the SLFP more than 40 ...pared with the eight it won in 1977. With ...Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) ...e in its 15-odd constituencies, the UNP ...ld have faced a vocal and sizeable oppo- ...n in Parliament which could have effec- ...y challenged the UNP's domination, par- ...ly in economic policy where Jaya- ...ne's open economy has drawn fire ...the SLFP and the left wing parties.

The UNP's way of averting such a pro- ...was cleared by the internal squabbles in ...SLFP and, more particularly, the ...daranaike family. The party broke into ...last year when Bandaranaike's son ...sided with her second in command, ...pala Senanayake, against the radical ...led by her daughter, the Sorbonne- ...ated Chandrika who is married to ...a screen star Vijaya Kumaratunge. As Senanayake moved towards the UNP, protesting against the rise of Chandrika's radicals—including some former insurgents who had led the unsuccessful insurrection in 1971—in the party hierarchy, Bandaranaike found herself immobilised in the middle.

Bandaranaike accuses Jayawardene of meddling in the SLFP's affairs. "They got hold of Maitripala Senanayake and there must be some agreement because it was he who started creating trouble inside the party, and caught hold of my foolish son who is very young and immature," she says, arguing

BHAWANI SINGH

Bandaranaike: immobilised

that the Government deprived her of her civic rights in 1981 "to keep me out" of any presidential race with him. Anura, she says, "has now realised what Senanayake's game was, and is returning to the fold. I told him to lie low for a bit, he's created enough problems."

Declining Standards: Chandrika and her husband, who now dominate the party organisation, have been accused of unconstitutional activity. Justifying the referendum, UNP spokesmen say that the SLFP was preparing for an extra-parliamentary seizure of power. In a nation-wide television address just before the referendum in December, Jayawardene justified the referendum saying that "during the presidential election campaign, there were speeches made by those who are now in control of the SLFP saying that the president's bowels should be taken out and hanged up on a tree, that the president would be administered the last rites under the Buddhist clergy's practice and that Mr Kobbekaduwa was advised, when he climbed on the steps of the President's Palace, that he should not walk on the red carpet but on the red blood that appeared on the two sides....We found that those people were preparing to take some action to act according to the speeches that were made if they won the election." And under proportional representation, the SLFP could have nominated anybody to serve in Parliament.

Bandaranaike dismisses the charges saying "that is all nonsense", but there seems little doubt that the politics of contention have changed the character of Sri Lankan elections which till last year were tame and even gentlemanly in comparison with their Indian equivalents. Inflammatory speeches were obviously made and strong-arm tactics have made an unwelcome appearance. Incidents of poll violence and harassment have been recorded by private individuals though nobody has yet responded to the Government's offer in Parliament to order inquiries into any incidents brought specifically to its notice. "Earlier we were a fairly open society. Now great walls of silence have been built all round," said one elder citizen.

Muted though it was, the negative vote in the referendum was eloquent enough to give Jayawardene reason to pause. Of the country's eight million voters, 3.5 million voted for Jayawardene in the presidential poll, but this figure dropped to about 3.15 million who voted for the Government in the referendum, indicating a 10 per cent swing even among UNP supporters. "A lot of UNP supporters voted against us in the referendum because they wanted to change their MP's," said a UNP functionary. In fact, no fewer than 21 UNP MP's, including two ministers, failed to get their constituents to vote for extending Parliament.

Silent Opposition: The UNP, in fact, lost in seven of the country's 21 districts. The four in the north and east are strongly Tamil dominated and the TULF worked actively against the UNP. But the ruling party also lost three key districts in the southern part of the island, and won the central highlands to the cost of the SLFP, largely on account of the Tamil tea estate population who hope to get citizenship rights.

Interestingly enough, though Jayawardene won the referendum handsomely in vote percentages, he could hardly have failed to realise that a very sizeable chunk of the Sinhala voter had turned against him—or stayed away from the poll altogether—and that this mute opposition finds no voice in Parliament, where on account of the SLFP's decimation in the 1977 election, the largest opposition party is the TULF, a linguistically and culturally distinct entity.

In a shrewd and not entirely popular move with some party members Jayawardene last year obtained undated resignations from all MP's and ministers. Colombo is now buzzing with speculation of impending cabinet reshuffles and even a mid-term general election in the constituencies where UNP MP's failed to carry the voter. It would be a novel way of placating a silent majority without giving up any real power—and a fitting climax to what is virtually a democratic *coup d'état*.

—SUMAN DUBEY in Colombo

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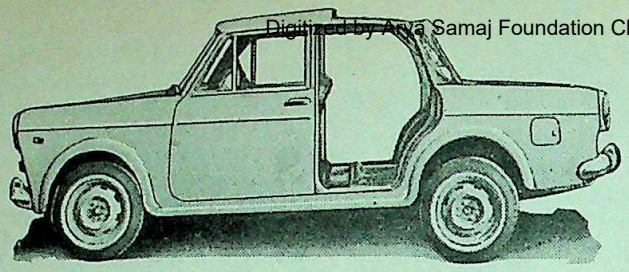

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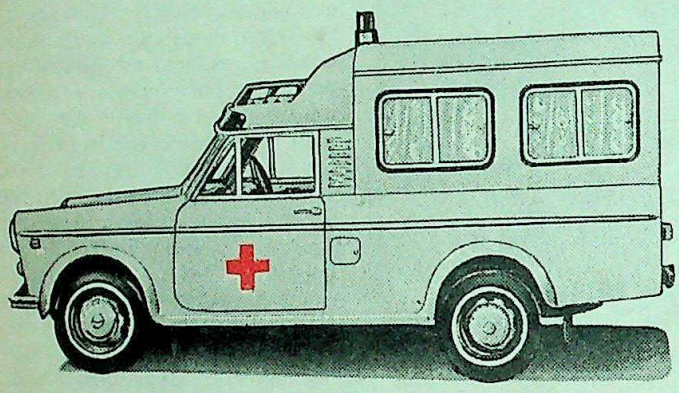

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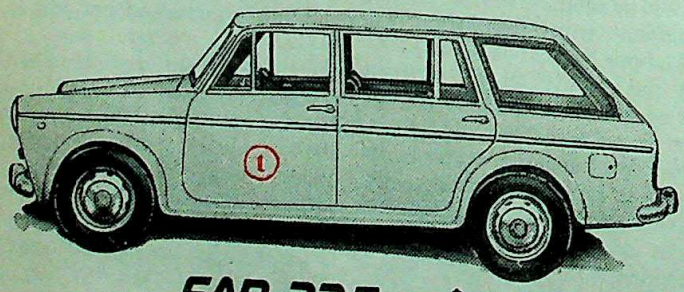

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ADMINISTRATION

The Pruning Process

IF IT proves to be anything more than an election gimmick, it is likely to cause an unprecedented bureaucratic re-shuffle. Last fortnight, in a series of moves aimed at toning up the Central Government, Mrs Gandhi ordered her Cabinet to dispense with the services of all officers who had either completed their tenure or were on extension with the Centre. Sent barely 72 hours before the crucial Delhi polls, the exhortation was ostensibly aimed at conveying her determination to shake the bureaucratic hierarchy.

The prime minister wrote to one of her senior colleagues looking after the Economic Ministries: "I have received reports, many complaints, about the working of the ministries, of corruption, inefficiency and callousness towards the people's difficulties. It has been made clear to them that unless they heed the warning and mend their ways right they may have to pay a very high price." A day later, on February 3, Mrs Gandhi repeated her warning while addressing an election meeting. Said she: "I am not going to spare anyone if he is found guilty of malpractices."

Her guidelines followed a series of discussions with senior colleagues and over a dozen secretaries to the Central Government. These directed the Department of Administrative Reforms and Personnel and the Cabinet Secretariat to prepare a draft for an administrative face-lift, which after approval was sent to all ministers. The guidelines stipulated that:

► all officers who were re-employed after retirement would have to go unless their appointment was reconfirmed by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet;

► all officers who had completed their tenure with the Centre, which varies from five to eight years, would be reverted back to their parent state and cadre; and

► extensions of all those officials who had crossed 58 years of age would stand cancelled.

Hit List: Among the likely victims of the prime minister's orders are over a dozen chairmen of public sector undertakings and numerous revenue organisations like Central Board of Customs and Excise, over 200 officials of the all-powerful Income Tax Department, over 60 additional secretaries and joint secretaries to the Central Government including those in the prime minister's office itself; and private secretaries to many Cabinet ministers. According to Home Ministry sources, 13 additional secretaries, 24 joint secretaries, 23 directors, 19 deputy secretaries and 10 under secretaries are affected immediately. Notable examples include:

► Foreign Secretary M.K. Rasgotra, who on his attaining the age of superannuation on September 30, 1982, was given a two-year extension and was to quit South Block only on October 1, 1984;

► G.S. Sahni, chairman, Central Board of Customs and Excise, was on extension till October 1983;

Among the likely victims of the order are over a dozen chairmen of public sector undertakings, over 200 officials of the all-powerful Income-Tax Department, and over 60 additional secretaries and joint secretaries.

► Jagdish Chand, chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes, who was due for retirement in July 1981, received a two-year extension till July 1983;

► S.N. Rai, chairman, Central Electricity Board (CEB) and B.N. Bose, member CEB, were both on temporary extension;

► V. Krishnamurthy, vice-chairman of the public sector Maruti Udyog Limited, who should have retired on January 13, 1983 but was given a one-year extension up to January 13, 1984;

► V.B.L. Mathur, managing director, National Cooperative Development Corporation who came to the Centre from Rajasthan on November 3, 1977, and whose five-year term expired in November 1982 but was extended for another six months;

► K.M.L. Chhabra, a Tamil Nadu cadre IAS joint secretary dealing with the vexed Assam tangle in the Home Ministry, who is on deputation with the Central Government since August 25, 1971, was to be reverted to Tamil Nadu in 1976 but has received nine one-yearly extensions so far;

► B.R. Patel, secretary, Union Public Service Commission, who completed his five-year deputation with the Central Government on August 2, 1980, was given three annual extensions;

► Tukhat Ram, the powerful joint chief controller of imports and exports who completed 58 years on May 31, 1981, was re-employed for two years and was due for retirement in May 1983;

► Ashok Kumar, a fairly junior IAS official from Bihar and currently managing director of National Consumers' Cooperative Federation (NCCF), joined the Central Government on December 17, 1977. After the completion of five years as deputy secretary to the Union Government in December 1980, he was picked up by Tapeshwar Singh, an influential Congress(I) MP from Bihar and chairman, NCCF.

Apart from those posted in New Delhi, Mrs Gandhi's fiat is also directed against those officials who managed foreign assignments when they were about to complete their tenure at the Centre. Interestingly, all the IAS officials on foreign postings would have been reverted to their states if they had continued in India. For example, D.K. Chatterjee, IAS working as minister (economic) in the commercial wing of the Indian Embassy at Paris joined the Central Government on August 1976 and was due to return to Orissa in 198[illegible] He was, however, given a year's extension in August 1981, and later, when Pranab Mukherjee took over as finance minister, Chatterjee found his way to Paris. Suraj Prakash Bagla, an IAS official from Punjab and now in the Indian Embassy in Washington, was joint secretary in the Home Ministry and the Planning Commission between 1977–198[illegible] Before he could complete his five-year tenure at the Centre he was given three years' extension and sent to the US.

Indeed if Mrs Gandhi implements [illegible]

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directives vigorously, her own secretariat and the Cabinet Secretariat will be severely hit. Cabinet Secretary C.R. Krishnaswamy Rao Sahib, a 1949 IAS officer has, barring a brief period, been with the Central Government since February 1952. Additional Secretary Prem Kumar, an IAS official from Uttar Pradesh; Director Vinod Vaish, IAS from Madhya Pradesh; and Joint Secretary R. Parameshwar, an Indian Audit and Accounts Service official (all with the Cabinet Secretariat) will have to be reverted to their states by April. Prem Kumar came to the Central Government in 1954, Vaish in 1966 and Parameshwar in 1955.

In the prime minister's office, Additional Secretary H.Y. Sharda Prasad (Mrs Gandhi's information advisor) and two of the three joint secretaries, Vijay Shankar Tripathi and R. Rajamani, will either be retired or reverted back to their states within the next five months. In fact, it is only the rigorous implementation here that can set the tone for a thorough follow-up in other ministries.

Tripathi, who officiates as joint secretary (political) to the prime minister, is one of the most powerful and controversial officials in the Union Government. He came to the Centre during the Emergency, on September 24, 1975 as special assistant to Vidya Charan Shukla, then Union minister for state for information and broadcasting.

RAILWAYS

Black Monday

NO CIVIL servant has won in a battle with a minister. And given the open war between Railway Minister A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury and railway board chairman Mohinder Singh Gujral, it was only a matter of time before Gujral finally went —as he did last fortnight in what railwaymen are beginning to call the "Monday afternoon massacre".

Shunted into the retirement siding along with Gujral is his fellow board member and might-have-been successor, B.B. Lal. With a third member of the five-man board due to retire by the month-end, and a fourth having been changed just a month earlier, Choudhury has achieved the clean sweep he had threatened at his now famous press conference last December. The broom reached one rung lower: about a dozen heads of departments in the railway board were simultaneously transferred to the most out-of-the-way stations. Many of them had been Gujral's most trusted aides and closest colleagues, hand-picked by him for key slots.

Shrewd Move: In dismissing Gujral and Lal, Choudhury had made use of the prime minister's January directive to dispense with the service of superannuated officers: both Gujral and Lal were on extension. But Gujral's sacking was clearly not what Mrs Gandhi had intended. As early as last December, Choudhury had sent up a proposal to replace Gujral with Lal, and failed to get clearance from the Cabinet's Appointments Committee. Now, using a handle conveniently within his reach, Choudhury had clearly upstaged Mrs Gandhi and presented her with a *fait accompli*. In the process, Lal (who had been on fairly good terms with Choudhury) found his head on the chopping block too.

Scores were being settled lower down too: all the initial batch of senior officers banished from Delhi belonged to the cadre of railway traffic officers. And engineering their exit from Rail Bhavan was a rival cadre of mechanical engineers: the two services are locked in a bitter court battle over inter-service seniority.

The dismissals and transfers were carried out with a vengeance, and with all the drama of a *coup d'etat*. Gujral, on tour in Bombay, was informed of his dismissal over the telephone. Lal was served with a cheque for three months' salary in lieu of notice, and promptly left his office. The name-plates of these and other officers were removed with indecent haste, their rooms immediately locked, and in some cases sealed cupboards shifted to other offices. The transferred officers were asked to report at their new posts in two days—often at locations two days' train journeys away. Many of them, in their new postings, would have to report to officers junior to them in the service hierarchy.

HARI OM GULATI

Gujral: losing the battle

Confusion: Work virtually stopped in Rail Bhavan as the tremors caused by the sweeping and unprecedented changes rocked the entire ministry. A World Bank loan appraisal team that landed in Delhi found that the officers it was to deal with had been transferred. A dinner in the team's honour had to be cancelled.

A new tourist train was about to be inaugurated from Calcutta, but both the headquarters officials in charge of tourist traffic had been sent packing. Further, all three senior officers co-ordinating the railway network's nation-wide freight movement were simultaneously relieved of their charge: the country's biggest organisation had virtually no one left at the helm. For good measure, Choudhury was out electioneering in Assam and the Minister of State, C.K. Jaffer Sharief, was away in Bangalore.

Gujral took his dismissal philosophically, seeing himself as the vanquished hero going down in a blaze of glory. "I have no regrets. I have had more than a full innings, and taken the railways to the pinnacle of their performance."

Aggressive Stand: The transferred officers, however, give every indication of trying to fight. Almost all of them have asked for leave, which at the time of writing was yet to be granted. But none of them had left Delhi to take charge of their new posts, and seemed to be waiting for a decision on the appeals they had put in against the transfers.

The crucial factor now seemed to be the fate of Choudhury himself. Was he on his way out too? For weeks on end the political wisdom has been that he will be eased out of the Cabinet. But with the elections on in Assam (where Choudhury is rustling up the Muslim vote) and the railway budget to be presented to Parliament immediately afterwards, there seemed little chance of a change.

One pointer to Choudhury's fate could come in the naming of Gujral's successor in what must now be considered a very hazardous job (in little over a decade, no fewer than four board chairmen have been sent summarily packing). Choudhury is known to be keen on appointing K.T.V. Raghavan, board member in charge of staff matters and the man who undertook a great deal of work for Choudhury in his Lok Sabha constituency of Malda. But he could be pipped at the post by either C.K. Swaminathan, a zonal general manager, or P.C. Luthar, a railway officer on deputation as chairman of the Damodar Valley Corporation. If Raghavan does not make it to the top, it could be a sign that Ghani Khan Choudhury's days are numbered too. If that happens, it will end up as a cleaner sweep than Choudhury intended.

—T.N. NINAN

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—T.N. NINAN

Though the earlier rules stipulated a five-year period of deputation at the Centre, Tripathi was given three extensions of one year each which finally expire in September 1983. The eight-year-old Om Prakash, currently prime minister's private secretary, is also among the affected. A Central Secretariat service official, he has been with the prime minister since August 1974, was due to leave in May 1982 but was given one year's extension.

Selective Implementation: Significantly, though the last date for fresh extensions to all affected officers is February 15, 1983, no decision regarding her own staff had been taken by Mrs Gandhi last fortnight. This delay has allowed a selective and discriminatory pruning of the ministries, fuelling allegations of political vendetta. While Railway Minister A.A. Ghani Khan Chaudhury gave sweeping orders to Railway Board chairman M.S. Gujral, B.K. Kapur, chairman of the Bangalore-based Hindustan Aeronautics Limited was sent packing owing to alleged differences with the Defence Ministry and the prime minister's secretariat. Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee made sweeping changes in the middle-level bureaucracy, and relieved both T.P. Jhunjhunwala, director of inspection (intelligence), and director of enforcement M.S. Bindra. Others affected include D.R. Sikka, chairman, National Project Construction Corporation and B.L. Wadhera, chairman, Central Coal Fields Limited.

The majority of senior officials feel that the prime minister's orders will not be implemented, partly because of regional and political considerations and partly due to the clout that some bureaucrats have come to wield.. In fact, similar orders issued by Morarji Desai during the Janata regime had led to the removal of hardly 25 per cent of the officers from their posts. Bemoaned a senior Finance Ministry official: "We don't mind if the rules are implemented without favouritism, but it just doesn't happen. People are just being victimised and humiliated. I am sure that prime minister would not like it if she were informed about it." At present, officers from non-Congress(I) ruled states Tamil Nadu, Tripura and West Bengal are overstaying at the Centre. For example, against respective state quotas of 45 and 44, 47 Tamil Nadu IAS officials and 58 West Bengal IAS officials were serving at the Centre. In addition, politically and financially powerful states like Bihar and Maharashtra were also over-represented at the Centre because they had maximum representation in the Cabinet. Amongst the states which were, however, poorly represented at the Centre were Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

By February 9, over 100 cases had reached the Home Ministry for making exceptions to the prime minister's directives. If Mrs Gandhi too comes around to concurring with the colleagues' opinions, it is likely that the exception might become the rule.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

If Mrs Gandhi implements her directives vigorously, her own secretariat and the Cabinet Secretariat will be severely hit. It is only implementation here that can set the tone in other ministries.

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FRAUD

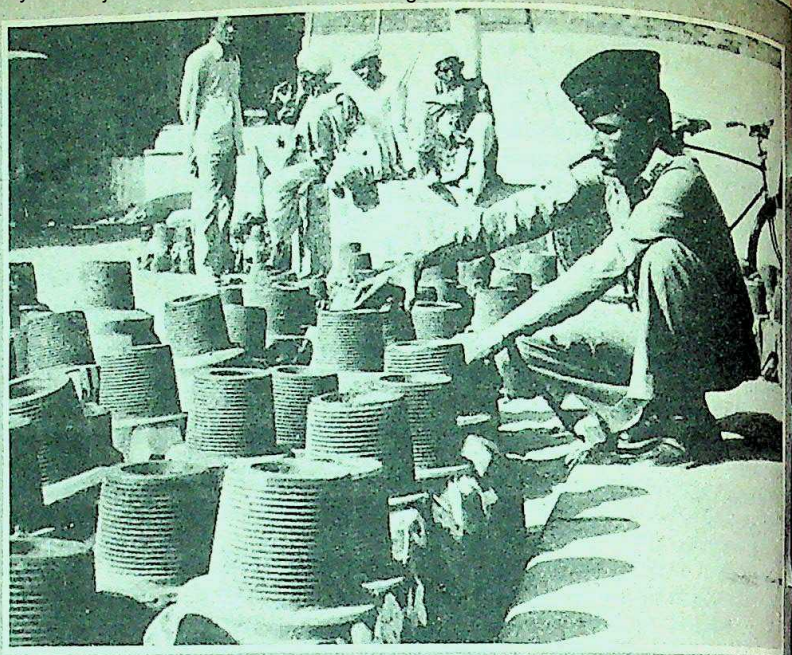
Busting The Banks

THE BANKING community in Gujarat has of late been considerably shaken by the discovery of a number of frauds. In the last two months, three substantial fiddles have come to light, where bank officials used holes in banking procedures to siphon off nearly Rs 4 crore. Last fortnight, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials uncovered a Rs 40.16 lakh swindle at the Dandia Bazar branch of the Bank of Baroda in Baroda, and another undercover operation involving Rs 25 lakh at the Gandhi Road branch of the Bank of India in Ahmedabad. And investigators are even now probing the massive swindle of Rs 3.30 crore unearthed early this year at the State Bank of India branch in the state capital Gandhinagar.

Of the three, the State Bank of India fraud is probably the most ingenious. The brain behind it is allegedly Kirit Acharya, a 35-year-old clerk, who has served 13 years with the bank. According to the investigators, Acharya used to issue cheques from the branch in favour of his accomplices. The cheques, presented at various other banks in the town would return for clearing. Acharya would promptly destroy them. If a cheque does not return within 24 hours, with objections attached, it is presumed that it has been cleared, and the banks, in all innocence, paid those who had presented Acharya's cheques.

Crucial Delay: At the same time, Acharya would show debits in the general clearing accounts which matched corresponding entries in the ledgers of the bank to which the cheques had been presented. Cheques with any errors are put in the general clearing accounts. These are sent to Bombay where a computer checks them out; the print-outs are sent to the bank concerned with comments on what needs to be rectified. In the State Bank of India's case, the print-outs did come from the Bombay office but piled up untended in Gandhinagar. The bank officials told investigating officers that they did not find the time to look into them.

Acharya allegedly used this crucial loophole to embezzle larger and larger sums over three years. On one day, his take was Rs 5 lakh. The clerk told police that he had no idea of how much money he ultimately siphoned off as he had not kept records. Investigating officers feel that they might find evidence to prove that Acharya had taken much more than the Rs 3.30 crore so far involved. They are questioning the others arrested along with Acharya: P.B. Karyee, a



Drilling bits recovered by the police: lax security

ONGC

Easy Pickings

STEALING from the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) is as easy as stealing candy from a child. At least so it seemed last fortnight when Dahyaji Thakore, an ONGC watchman, was arrested for stealing 159 drilling bits each weighing 40 kg. When interrogated, Thakore said he had been removing the bits which each cost Rs 10,000, one by one over the last two years.

ONGC officials who had reported that the thefts had all taken place last month were quick to deny this claim. But police are sceptical. In a series of raids they said they had already recovered 151 bits from surrounding villages. And they made no secret that they expect to find many more. Says one officer: "The ONGC says that it lost only 159 bits. We will soon find more than what they feel they have lost."

The police base this belief on past experience. They say that ONGC officials are always reluctant to report thefts or even admit to them. This has led to some piquant situations in the past. Only last year the Mehsana police recovered 104 galvanised pipes almost identical to what the ONGC uses from a man named Ishwar Kalal. But the ONGC denies that the pipes belonged to them.

This was not the first time that the police have found themselves lumbered with stolen property. Ten years ago the then deputy superintendent of police P.K. Dutta had recovered 50 drilling bits all with Russian markings. But the ONGC flatly denied that the drills belonged to it and they are still rotting in Mehsana police station.

Inside Jobs: One reason why the ONGC is reluctant to acknowledge its own property is that it would be difficult to explain how so much had been spirited away without anybody noticing it. But a more powerful reason is that many thefts take place with the connivance of ONGC officials. Says one official: "The thefts are bound to continue as both the ONGC and the police are in it."

Besides this, officials point out that the ONGC's security systems are totally inadequate. Recent months have seen an upsurge in the number of oil thefts from ONGC installations. Only last month some thieves tried to drill into an underground ONGC pipeline. They had obviously planned to fit a valve to the pipeline which they could turn on and off as and when they wanted. Unfortunately for them they could not control the flow of gushing oil which flooded a nearby field. Sources point out that the thieves could hardly have known the location of the pipeline unless they had inside information.

Despite the increasing number of such thefts the ONGC has only 134 guards to protect its 200 wells in Mehsana. The police also insist that they are already overstretched and cannot spare more men to guard ONGC installations. But until the ONGC does begin to take more care, it looks as if it will continue to be good at losing its own property as it is at finding oil.

—RAMESH MENON

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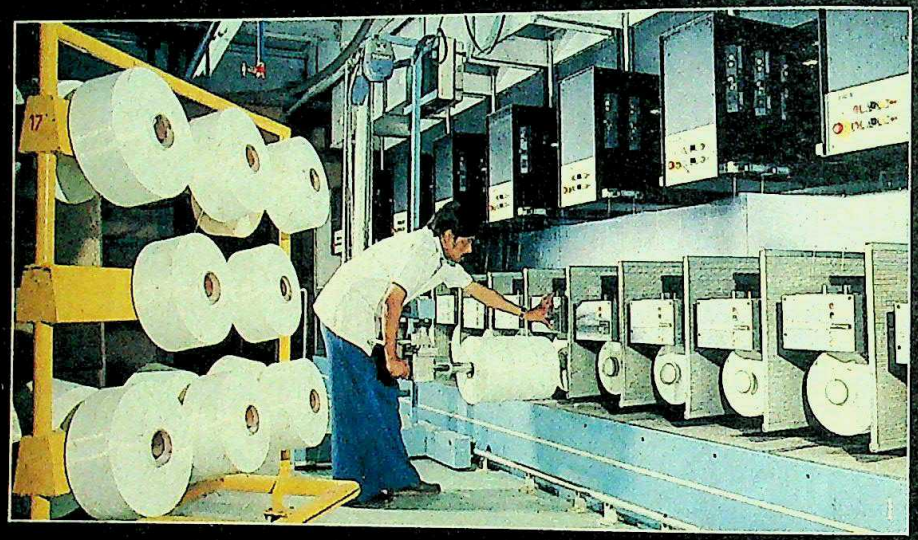
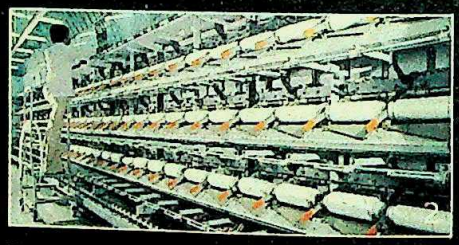
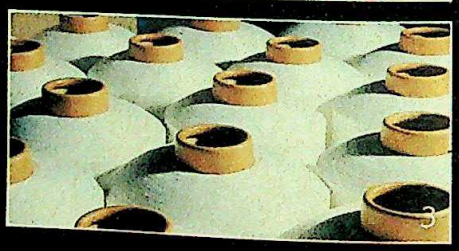
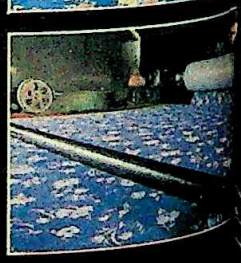
India's most vertically-ingrat









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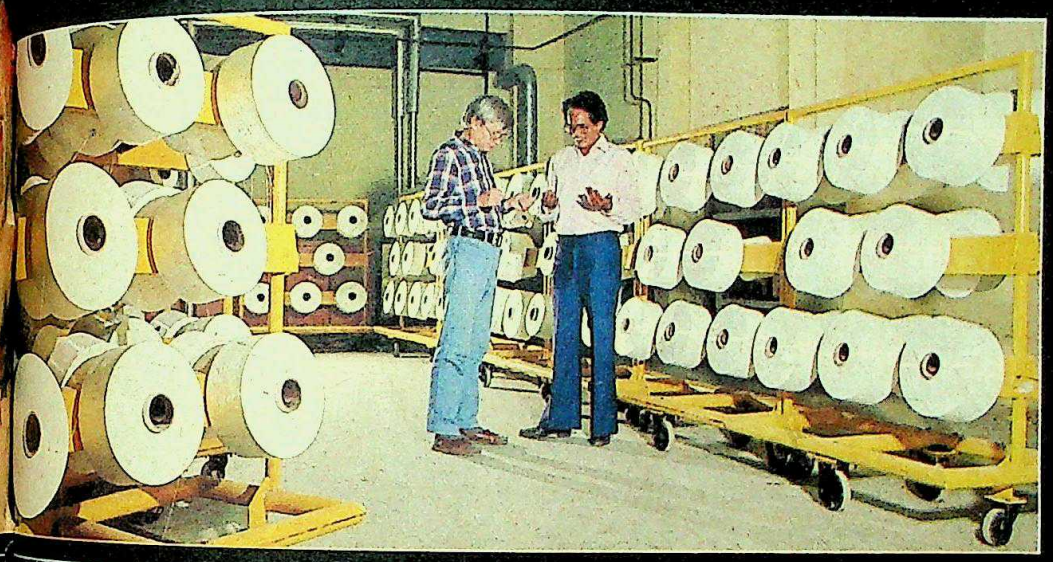
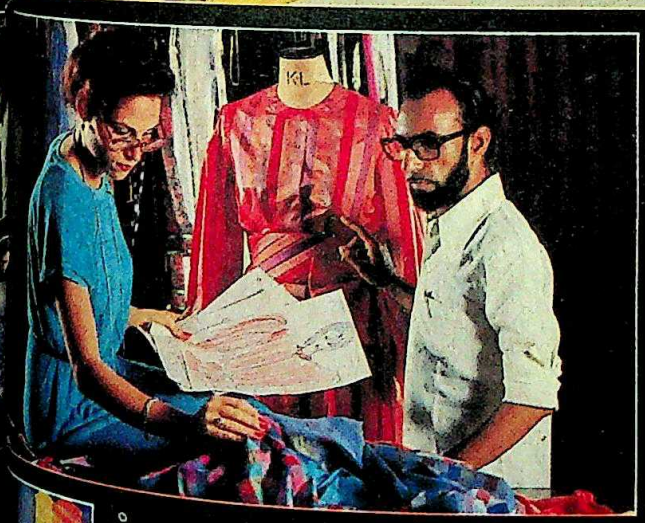
y-integrated textile group.





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messenger, and three government employees G.S. Sheikh, G.N. Vyas and H.P. who were allegedly Acharya's

According to the police, the clerk in- the money in film production, financ- distribution and exhibition—in the last years he has produced 12 films. He is reported to have built a theatre in Jamnagar costing Rs 60 lakh. He owns cars and six scooters and has a five- flat. Karyee went round town in a but the surprising affluence of a bank and a messenger did not make the authorities smell a rat.

Bad Loans: The two frauds that came to last fortnight involved lesser sums. CBI claim that the middle-aged bank of the Bank of Baroda's Dandia branch in Baroda, Mrs S.S. Rawal, loans to 280 persons for the purchase auto-rickshaws and vans. They charge most of the loans were issued in the of non-existent people and were in fact to Pratap Rajput, the partner in a firm in auto-rickshaws. The loan pro- is that the borrower obtains the papers from the dealer to prove that bought the vehicle. What actually say the police, was that Rajput fake documents prepared—and the went unchecked.

The transactions, adding up to Rs 40.16 took place between January 1979 and 1981. Intelligence officers swooped on the bank after the Bank of Baroda's cell told them that they suspected a lot of procedural lapses were taking in the bank.

Dubious loans also figured in the se- of the cases. S.S. Vaidya, manager of Gandhi Road branch of the Bank of in Ahmedabad was found to be ad- loans for video games to private without checking out the viability of projects. The thorough investigations banks are supposed to make before out money were allegedly not made. amount involved in this fiddle was Rs 25

These revelations have led investigators For example, they found that the branch of the Bank of India was loans a second time to the same without checking. Even as investi- continue, Superintendent of Police Pande feels that more frauds will be uncovered in many other banks of Meanwhile, bank officials main- a studied silence on the latest disco- but agreed that undetected frauds exist banks. Obviously, the police, whose are continuing, have only un- the tip of the iceberg.

—RAMESH MENON

ANUBHAI SHAH

Contraband being pulled out of a well: a rich haul

SMUGGLING

The Big Squeeze

CUSTOMS officers in Gujarat are patting themselves on the back for seizing Rs 2.5 crore worth of contraband. This was one of the biggest hauls ever but it was not an easy job. The events leading up to the seizure had all the elements of a thriller.

The drama began when customs officers arrived on the spot as the smugglers were loading three trucks with electronic goods and textiles. But when they tried to stop the smugglers they found themselves heavily outnumbered. Undeterred by this they set out in chase and managed to stop one truck. They also managed to arrest Haji Haji Ismail, a man they have been trying to get their hands on for a long time, as he tried to get away from the area.

In the days that followed, the customs got more leads. They threw a heavy cordon around the area and as a result the smugglers had to hide the trucks in the surrounding area. One was later found abandoned near a farm belonging to Abu Miya Bapu, an associate of Ismail. The second was also recovered from another farm. They also got information that one more vessel the *Vajaliprasad* had landed contraband on the Jamnagar coast recently. The contraband was later found in two dry wells near Kanalus village.

More important than the actual seizures, said customs officers, was the arrest of Ismail. Customs officers hope that the latest haul and the arrests will lead to an appreciable decline in smuggling on the Jamnagar coast. Says Siddharth Sekhon, deputy director of revenue intelligence: "We are out to finish the remaining smuggling syndicates operating on the Gujarat coast."

Big Losses: This may be an optimistic estimate but there is no doubt that the smugglers have been suffering big losses this season. In the last two months the customs have seized more than Rs 3 crore worth of contraband. This is nearly as much as they picked up in six months last year.

The customs hope that the latest breakthrough will give them a lead to major smuggling syndicates which are using the Gujarat coast to land contraband. Some of the documents seized from Ismail indicate that he has connections with an MLA from Jamnagar.

The customs also say that the latest catch was partly the result of coordination with the police. Previous efforts to nab smugglers failed because the police played nothing more than a spectator's role. The Jamnagar seizure has also highlighted the fact that the customs work under severe constraints. At one point when the contraband was being loaded onto the trucks the customs officers were surrounded by the smugglers and were lucky to escape with their lives. And at every stage of the battle the odds were against them. There can be no doubt that they need more equipment because it is unlikely that luck will favour them at every encounter.

—RAMESH MENON

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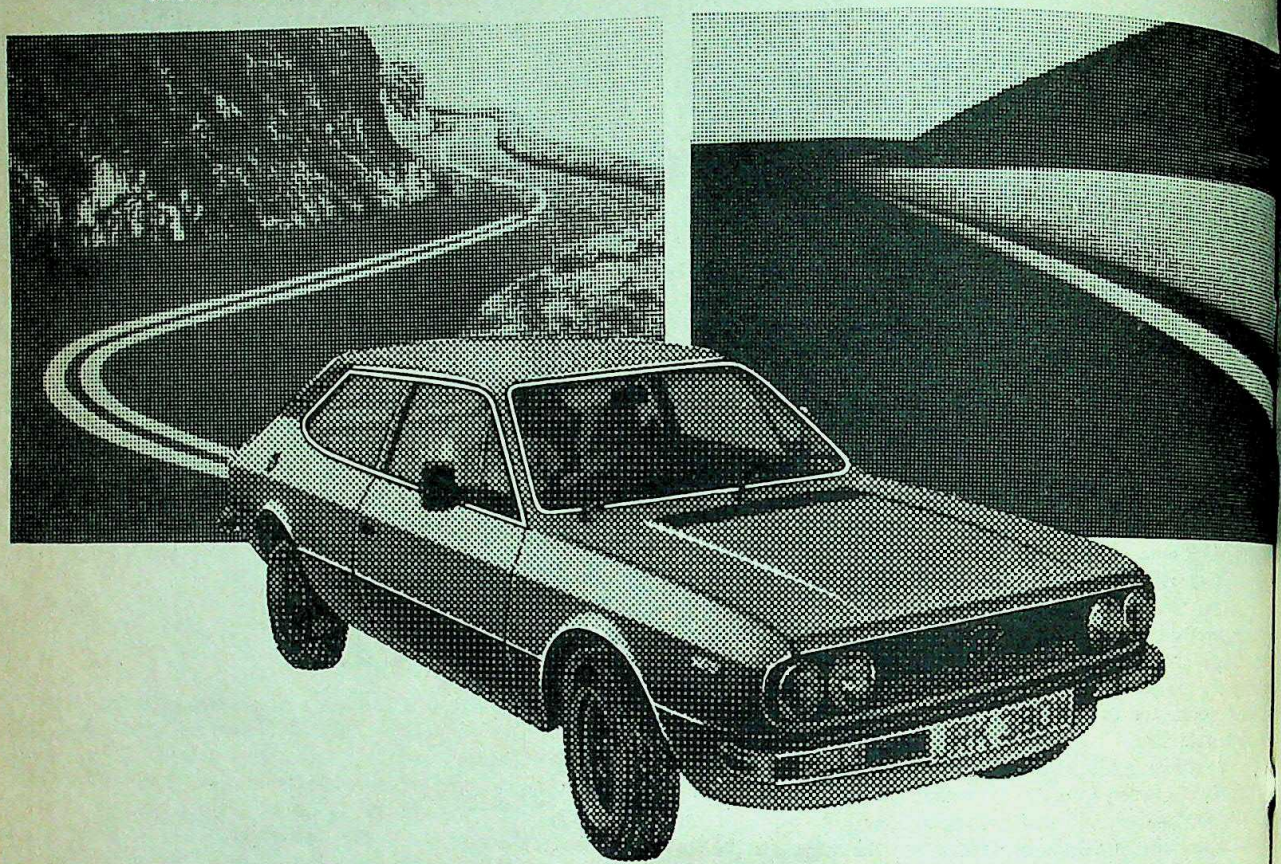

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RAJ CHENGAPPA

MAHENDRAGIRI

Space Invaders

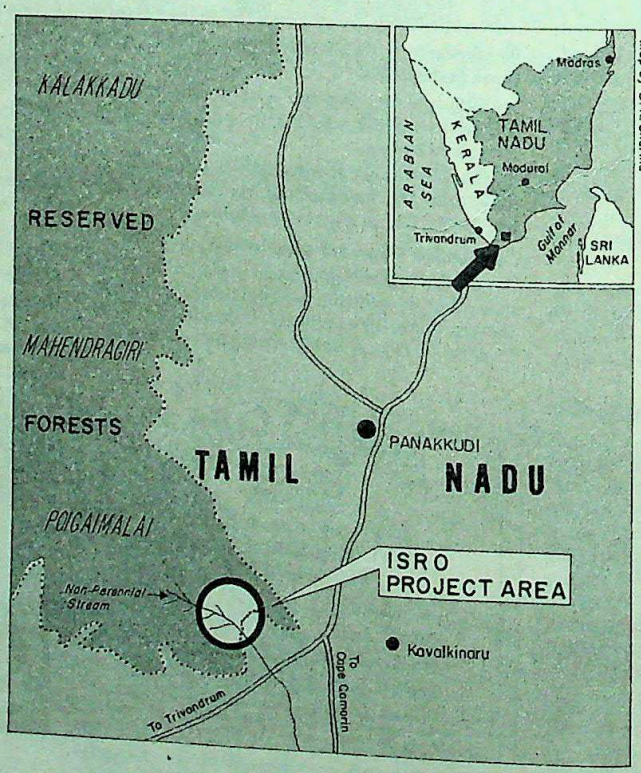
A section of the Mahendragiri hills where the ISRO site is located: misplaced priorities

ECOLOGISTS in the country are now training their guns on the prestigious Rs 22 crore liquid propulsion testing facility of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) coming up in the Mahendragiri hills at the tail-end of the Western Ghats in Kanyakumari district.

Impelled by a report from environmentalist Rauf Ali, who was till last fortnight a researcher in the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and the World Wildlife Fund, Southern Region, have already asked the Department Of the Environment (DOE) to scrutinise the project, nicknamed the 'Noisy Valley' but have met with little success. The DOE has reportedly washed its hands of the issue, stating complacently that a high-power advisory committee of the Agriculture Ministry has already cleared the project and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has given her concurrence.

Controversial Site: But investigations made by INDIA T[illegible] reveal that although ISRO cla[illegible] have made a systematic eco[illegible] impact study before starting [illegible] on the project in April la[illegible] reality the Tamil Nadu F[illegible] Department was steam-ro[illegible] into compliance after it r[illegible] serious objections to the testing [illegible] coming up in the Mahend[illegible] hills. Not only this; ISRO's [illegible] claim that noted ecologist Ma[illegible] Gadgil was involved in the [illegible] tion of the site and cleared it [illegible] vironmental aspects is unfou[illegible] Gadgil's involvement in the p[illegible] selection was used as one of th[illegible] factors by ISRO to secure env[illegible] mental clearance.

But Gadgil himself ad[illegible] in Bangalore that he has so far [illegible] visited the Mahendragiri hill[illegible] ISRO only took him to a site [illegible] Trivandrum in Kerala w[illegible] examined the environmenta[illegible] pact it could have there but [illegible] the Mahendragiri hills. S[illegible] angry Ali: "Despite the rising [illegible] ronment consciousness, w[illegible] Silent Valley controversy h[illegible]



Map by B. K. Sharma

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example, the Government has again let project which could cause large-scale ical damage in the long run."

Like the Silent Valley, where the Government wanted to construct a project in virgin tropical forests, Mahendragiri hills have much of their east-ges covered with dense scrub jungle ch moist deciduous forests on the hill-and ravines. The hill site is sandwiched the Kallakad sanctuary and the Poi-hill forest reserve which form the last ts of the Western Ghats. The unique tailed macaque, which was at the centre the Silent Valley controversy, also in-the Mahendragiri hills along with the thar, elephant and sambhar.

The project site is situated in a bowl-valley with peaks averaging 3,000 ing above it. The terrain ky and undulating with scrub jungle covering of the slopes. Dry stream sect the region; Mahen-hills being a rain-area receives little rain-The national highway from to Kanyakumari is km away from the site, testing station is hidden by a hillock. The nea-illage Panakuddi (popu-1984, 1971 census) is 4 km from the site. Kanya-and Nagercoil are only away, and the Vikram Space Centre in Tri-where the Liquid Project (LPP) has its base, is 100 ay.

Technical Compulsions: ISRO was keen through the testing site at any cost the LPP, if successful, could launch space programme for the '90s. While has reached world standards in solid sion systems, it has just started maste-quid fuel engines. Liquid propellants ing of two chemicals, unsymmetrical methyl hydrazine (UDMH) and red-fuming gen tetroxide) has a higher burning effi-and provides greater thrust than solid ants, which are made from a muddy chemical resin. ISRO has already deve-a liquid-propelled engine called Vikas technology picked up from the Societe Propulsion de Propulsion (SEP), a French research organisation.

It has also developed a non-carcino-route to make UDMH and has handed technology to the Indian Drugs and ceuticals Limited (IDPL), a public undertaking, for manufacture at its head plants. As a beginning, ISRO has to use a 60-tonne thrust, liquid-pro-engine as the second stage booster in the four-stage Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) which would shoot the fully semi-operational Indian Remote Satellite (IRS) into a sun-synchronous orbit 1,000 km from the Earth in 1988.

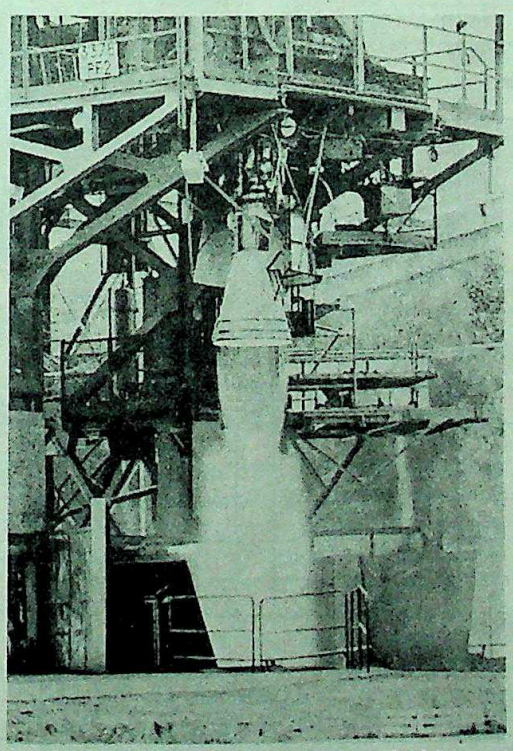
Gadgil: key factor

But before it is shot into space, the liquid-propelled engine would have to be tested so that, as T.N. Seshan, secretary, space commission puts it: "It doesn't behave funnily once it is in space." The engine consists of a cylindrical tank as high as a street electric pole, with a diameter the size of a garden well, and a capacity to hold 33 tonnes of fuel. The engine itself is a funnel-shaped, seven-foot structure made of special steel. When ignited, it is expected to push the PSLV from a speed of 8,280 km per hour to 38,880 kmph—which is 36 times the maximum speed of an Indian Air Force Jaguar.

When tests are done on the ground, the flame length from its exhaust is about 52 feet high, or as tall as a four-storey building. The heat generated, which is estimated at 1,200 degrees Centigrade, is slightly lower than that needed to melt steel in a furnace. The noise it emits is enough to shatter a person's ear-drum if he stands 10 feet away. The exhaust fumes it belches contain 20 per cent of carbon monoxide, deadly enough to kill a person if he inhales it within half a kilometre of the site.

Requirements: To choose a site to test this awesome engine two basic criteria had to be considered: it had to be functional and it had to be safe. Dr A.E. Muthunayagam, LPP's bespectacled project director, explains that since the PSLV would be launched from Sriharikota Range (SHAR) Centre in Andhra Pradesh, the site had to be south of the Vindhyas for easy transportation of the rocket. Consequently, the Governments of Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu were initially approached.

Investigations made lately, however, reveal that although ISRO claims to have made a systematic ecological impact study before starting work on the project in April last, in reality the Tamil Nadu Forest Department was steam-rollered into compliance after it raised serious objections to the testing site coming up in the Mahendragiri Hills.



ISRO's Vikas engine: damaging decision

Since the engine would be tested vertically, a hilly terrain was necessary, as the cost of constructing a gantry to secure the rocket as well as lifting the fuel would be considerably reduced. The soil has to be hard and rocky so that the testing stand, which has clamps that hold the rocket stationary while testing, could be absolutely secure. Because of the danger of fire accidents there should be no vegetation in the core testing area; nor should there be a perennial stream or a catchment area as it is likely to get polluted. The area and its environs would have to be uninhabited to eliminate air and noise pollution.

THE TESTING station would basically have three zones: The non-explosive hardware zone where the equipment and instruments would be kept; the explosive and toxic zone in which 150 tonnes of UDMH and nitrogen tetroxide would be stored in large tanks; the explosion zone where the testing of the engine would be done. The core area consisting of the three zones would be located in a radius of 1 km and an area with a 2 km radius would be

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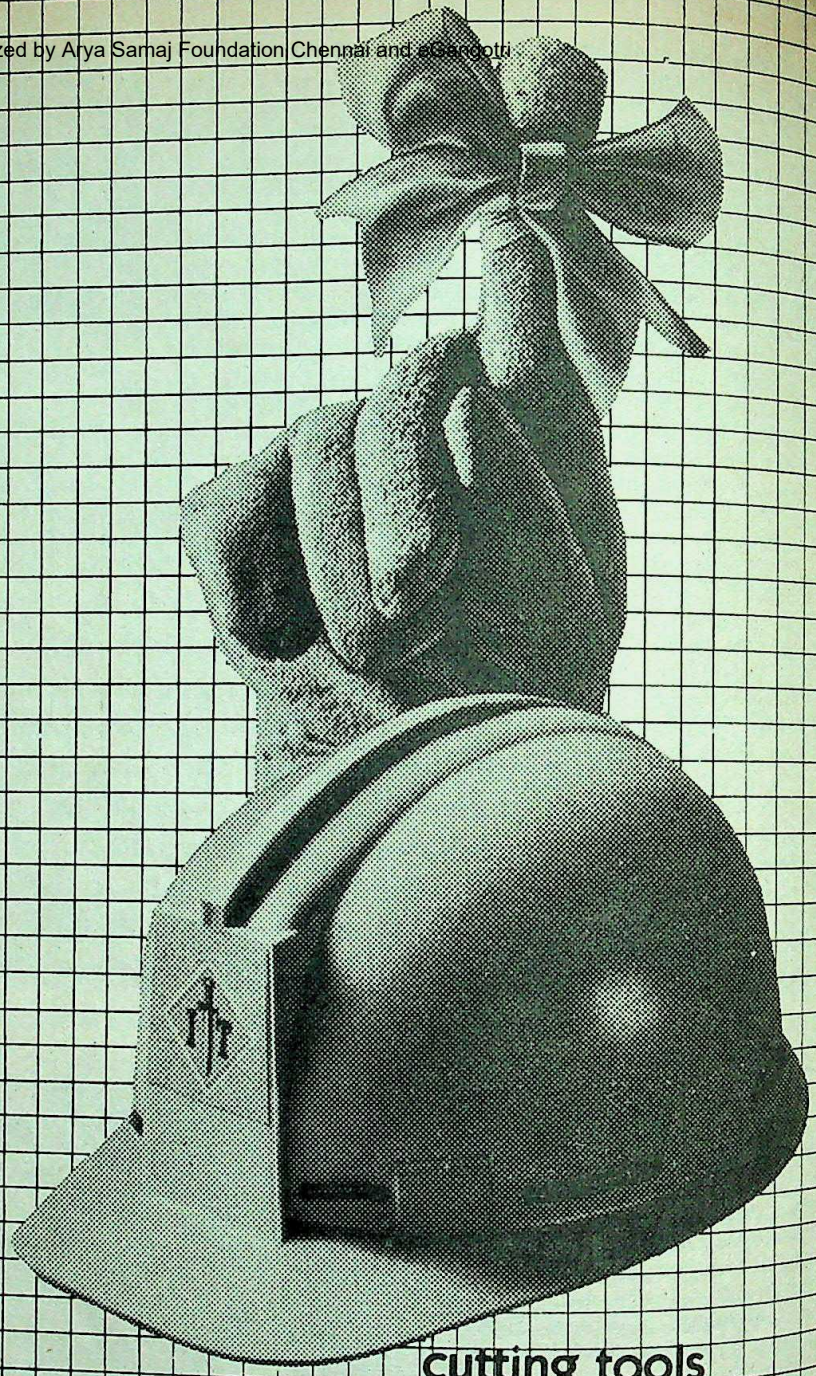

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...ed off to act as a buffer zone.

Ecological Impact: The search for a ...y site began in 1975 and ISRO claims ...a team of 40 scientists surveyed a total of ...s in the six states. Finally in 1979 the ...e narrowed down to four: Anchana... in Kerala, Tirupati in Andhra Pra... and Therkumalai and Mahendragiri, ...in Tamil Nadu. Scientists said they ...d Tirupati out because there was a large, ...g population and it could be difficult ...control pollution in case there was an acci... Anchanakuppam was covered with ...forests and had plenty of streams and ...ger of disturbing wildlife as well as ...g the streams knocked it out from ...

...Therkumalai, which is ...e to Mahendragiri, fitted ...ll except for the draw... that it bordered the na... highway hardly a kilo... away and ISRO would ...to take over a large ...er of private estates. ...ndragiri was considered ...by the ISRO team, not only ...se it was a rain-shadow ...but because vegetation ...se in the core area and ...d the required hilly and ...terrain.

The credit must go to ISRO ...g a detailed ecological ...t survey of each of these ...but the way they went ...getting the Mahendragiri ...left much to be desired. ...whether the Tamil Nadu ...department objected to ...selection of Mahendra... both Muthunayagam and ...Rajan, scientific staff offi... the chairman, categori...denied they had problems ...Tamil Nadu.

But official sources in ...reveal that on October 6, ...a meeting was held in ...where the chief secreta... the industries secretary, the chief conser... of forests and the finance secretary had ...sions with the space secretary. They ...six objections to the project to which ...gave "cursory" replies. Considering ...ense survey it had done, ISRO was ex... to be more illuminating with its expla... The objections and the replies were: Tamil Nadu Government: There is a ...preventing forest land from being used ...non-forestry purposes. ISRO: "Excep... can be made."

The area is the home of the Nilgiri thar ...goat) and the famous lion-tailed ...ISRO: The explosions would be "could not be considered serious or detrimental to wildlife".

► It would affect the numerous non-perennial streams. ISRO: There would be minimum interference caused to streams and there would not be any adverse effects.

► There could be a problem of air and water pollution. ISRO: There would be a "problem of pollution wherever we go". It assured the state Government that it would take safety measures to keep it at the minimum.

► There were at least 4,000 cattle grazing in the area. ISRO: "The cattle can be diverted from the area."

Another loose statement made by ISRO is that there are no animals around . . . But the forest department itself puts the number of Nilgiri thar present in the area at around 150 and estimates that there are at least 300 lion-tailed macaques in the Mahendragiri reserve.

► There was a danger of forest fires as the area was dry. ISRO replied: "Such a possibility will not occur and would be guarded against."

Questionable Approval: With the Tamil Nadu Government opposing the project tooth and nail, an advisory committee of the Union Ministry of Agriculture was constituted. It consisted of the minister for agriculture; the secretary, space commission; the joint secretary, forests; the joint secretary to the prime minister; the chief secretary of Tamil Nadu and the chief conservator of forests. A meeting was held in New Delhi on June 2, 1981, when the committee decided to clear the project because it felt that ISRO had done a detailed ecological impact survey. Moreover, it was argued, eminent ecologists like Madhav Gadgil had studied the ecological impact report and cleared it.

The Tamil Nadu Government was told to play down its objections and warned not to create a furore. On June 18, 1981 ISRO finally received clearance from the Ministry of Agriculture to go ahead with the project. The forest department reluctantly handed over 2,802 acres in the Mahendragiri reserve forests and 196 acres from the adjacent Poigaimalai reserve forests for the core area. For the buffer or safety zone 1,504 acres in Poigaimalai and 498 acres of the Mahendragiri range were earmarked. These were issued to ISRO on a yearly lease at a nominal rent of Rs 1,000 per annum.

Several statements made by ISRO do not match the topography of the area. Muthunayagam says that there is "no vegetation" in the area, and Seshan adds that even if a tree has to be cut they have to get the prior sanction of the Chairman, Professor S. Dhawan. A visit to the project site revealed that not only did the core area have fairly dense scrub jungle, but the buffer zone also had thick scrub forests; on the ridge of the Mahendragiri hills were dense, moist deciduous forests. Dhawan must have given sanction for felling at least 500 scrub trees, because not only are the stubs visible in the core area but also the cut trees were being used as temporary fences around the core zone.

It is surprising that the forest department did not raise the issue of trees being destroyed in the area for, as Ali says: "These are fairly good forests by Tamil Nadu standards." Ali should know, for he was sponsored by the BNHS three years ago to make an in-depth study of the region along with the adjacent forest reserves. He has proposed a biosphere reserve called Agasthyamalai, which includes the ISRO's project site, and clearance is awaited.

Unprofessional Methods: In preparing its ecological impact report, ISRO claims to have consulted three Indian Institute of Science (IIS) professors including Gadgil, two IDPL members, a Bhabha Atomic Research Centre specialist, the Indian Meteorological Department and the Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilisers. A check of what really transpired between

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ISRO and two of the experts is revealing.

Gadgil, who was consulted on the ecological damage, was questioned only on two aspects: whether the noise would disturb animals, to which he replied: "I guess if it is infrequent it would not"; and secondly, on the type of nature conservation methods ISRO should adopt. Gadgil says he has no idea what would be the levels of noise and air pollution in the area and his discussions with ISRO were only of a "general" nature. Professor R. Kumar, a chemical engineer in IIS, is a specialist on how to control air pollution and he found ISRO's study "scientific and systematic". But he admitted that he was not competent to analyse the impact of chemical pollution on plant and animal life.

Neither of these two experts has visited the area or is conversant with its topography and ecology. The discussions were held "so many years ago" that neither remembers which site they were consulted on or even the exact year. Gadgil only remembers that it was in around 1976–77 that they were involved. If this is true, then the Mahendragiri site could not have been discussed because ISRO's ecological impact report on the area was ready only in June 1979. ISRO's claim that even experts have cleared the project is diluted by the way these two specialists on pollution were consulted.

ANOTHER loose statement made by ISRO is that there are no animals around. As Muthunayagam says: "I have spent several months in the area and I haven't seen one." But the forest department itself puts the number of Nilgiri thar present in the area at around 150 and estimates that there are at least 300 lion-tailed macaques in the Mahendragiri reserve. In fact, the Kalakkad forest reserve, the world's only sanctuary for lion-tailed macaques, is hardly 10 km away from the project site.

Ali, who has done several years of field study in the adjoining hills, is certain that there are lion-tailed macaques in the area, apart from a special species of the bonnet macaque found only at the tail-end of the Western Ghats. If ISRO scientists had checked further they would have found that the Mahendragiri hills house a unique burrowing snake named after them, called *Uropeltis Mahendrae*. Besides, sloth bears, elephants and sambhars have been spotted in the area by forest officials.

Again, ISRO's argument that the explosions would be few and far apart and would not disturb wildlife is questionable. The engine will be tested for a total of 3,000 seconds (or 50 minutes) spread over three years; the firing would be restricted to a maximum of two minutes at a time. This would mean that there would be a test done every month. While at the testing site the noise level would be 160 decibels, in the buffer zone it would be around 100 decibels which is as loud as the sound of a Boeing landing if a person stands 30 feet away from it. Seshan maintains that "human beings won't even need an ear-plug. It would sound like a marriage party."

Hazards: But to sensitive animal ears it could sound like Doomsday. Gadgil argues that the animals would get used to the sound, to which Ali counters: "Does your dog ever get used to crackers?" As M.A. Parthasarathy, chairman, WWF, southern region (who is also concerned deeply about the problem) points out: "The way the animals would get used to it is to leave the area. It would narrow down the already meagre sanctuary area they have and bunch them together unhealthily."

Their fears are fuelled all the more by the fact that the nearest village Panakuddi is hardly 4 km away from the project site. Apart from that, the national highway is only 2 km away, and if this was used as an argument to abandon the nearby Therkumalai project, why did not ISRO consider it when selecting Mahendragiri hills?

Surprisingly, ISRO has not made a study on the echo effect the blast may produce in the hills, and scientists when questioned lamely admitted that so far no measurements were made of such an impact. The space department's plan of fencing off the area has also brought a storm of protests from ecologists. By doing so, ISRO indirectly admits that there are animals in the area which have to be prevented from entering the site.

ISRO assures that air pollution in the area would be much below the permissible limit under normal testing operations. Again, ecologists question the veracity of this statement, for the buffer zone includes forest area and the impact the test firings could have on plant and animal life is a debatable issue. The argument would be tenable only if there was no wildlife in the area.

The risks of having an accident are high because, as Rajan says: "We are basically in the incendiary job." The scientists say that even if there is a major explosion the pieces would not fly beyond the core zone—w is merely a reassurance. What ecolog want to know is that if a 'maximum cred accident' (as it is called) occurs, would buffer zone be safe from devastating air po lution? Their fears are fuelled all the more the fact that the nearest village Panakud hardly 4 km away from the project s Apart from that, the national highwa only 2 km away, and if this was used as a gument to abandon the nearby Therku project, why did not ISRO consider it when lecting Mahendragiri hills?

Official Apathy: What has surpr ecologists is the attitude of the DOE which steered clear of the project. The DOE formed three years ago, primarily to act "watchdog" body for all major projects fecting India's environment. But in the of ISRO's testing facility, it has so far not barked. The reason for this oster reticence is that since 'space' comes under prime minister, it is dealt with "at higher vels" and ISRO's projects do come to the DOE for clearan

Despite all these facts, is confident that it has done job thoroughly. Assures S han: "There will be hardly ecological damage and would ensure that maxim safety is provided in the pro area." But ecologists are no tisfied with assurances want hard facts. Ali is con ned that the way ISRO go project approved could s precedent, and all other pro such as dams and hydel being planned by the state vernment would be pushed through the same arguments.

Parthasarathy is upset that ISRO did make its ecological impact report a pu matter so that all those concerned co really assure themselves that the pr would cause minimum ecological dama the scientists claim. Said he: "Whatever do in outer space they can keep as a s But what they do on earth, especially w affects the public, should be made kno The BNHS is unhappy with the way the has washed its hands of the issue a Curator, J. Daniel, plans to visit the p site in May to get a first-hand idea of problem.

ISRO has already constructed a mud road in the area and has started struction on a few buildings. But the gists who are planning to raise the ban revolt might make more noise in the next months than the blast that the liquid pr sion testing site would produce when ready by 1985.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA in Mah

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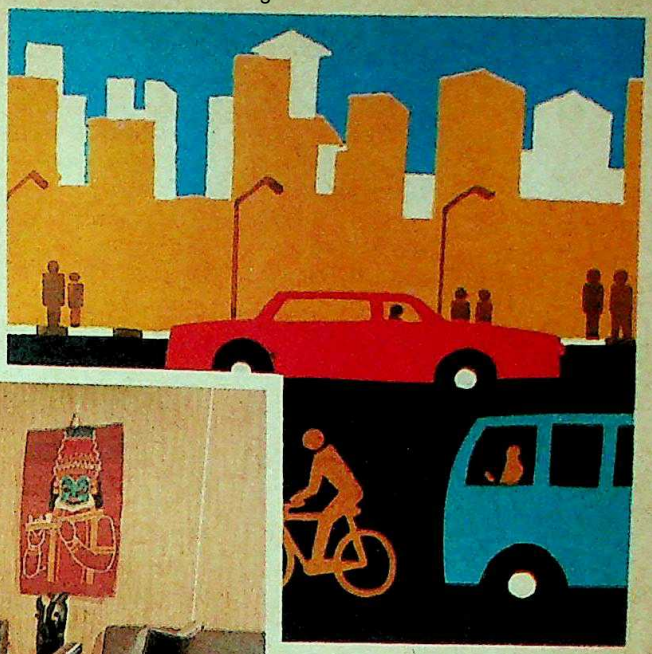

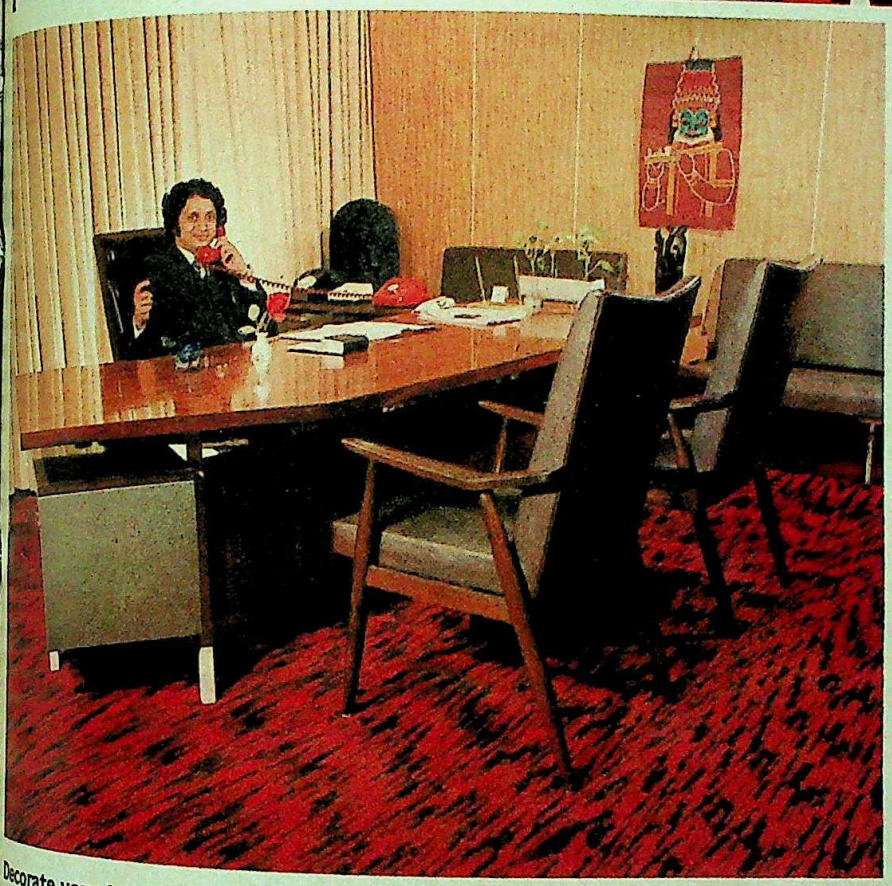

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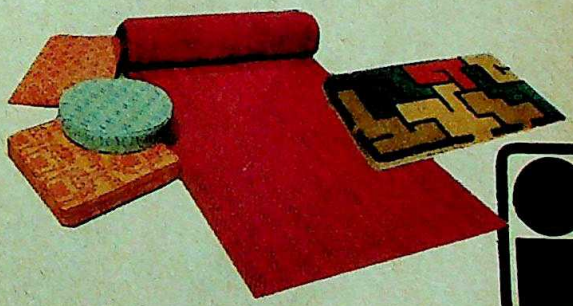

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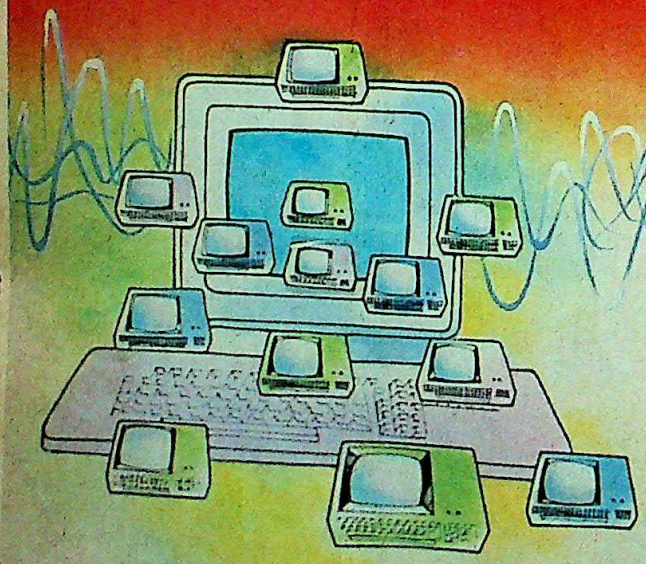

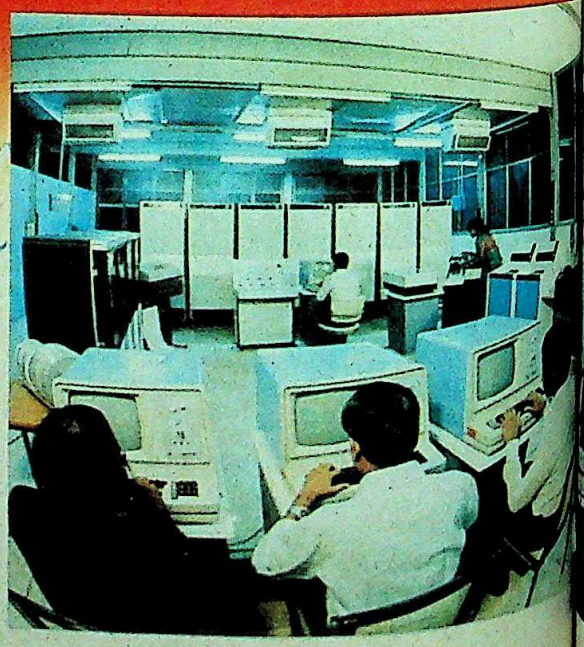

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...TAKA

...ysterious Malady

...ITH politics holding centre-stage ...n Karnataka, a deadly epidemic ...ging in the state's hilly Bel...h taluk in coastal Dakshina Kan...district has elicited little governmental ...-sympathy. By January 17, when the ...pointed Janata Government finally ...ed to recognising the crisis, 10 ...had died and 58 others had been ...to hospital. The causes and nature ...disease had local authorities baffled ...sequently steps to check it were mini...Said the area's Deputy Commissioner ...Das: "Initially we thought it was ...encephalitis and even Japanese en...We just couldn't diagnose it."

...The first death had occurred on ...ber 18, the day Prime Minister Indira ...launched her whirlwind election ...from this district. The victim, 48-year-...Mondari Narayana, died of an undiag...fever in a private nursing home in ...ga. By January 5, four more people ...but the local administration, busy ...electioneering did not pay adequate ...

...**Rising Panic:** In the face of official ...the people of Dakshina Kannada ...with their own explanations for the ...killer disease. Already highly ...ious, they were convinced that the ...was the result of the wrath of ...(spirits). Their fears were confirmed ...it was reported that 16 km from Bel...town in the forest tehsil of Patrame ...contractors had chopped down ...sacred rosewood tree of the Mala ...di, a feared local spirit. Strengthening this belief was the fact that 45 of the 58 seriously ill were from Patrame as were four of the dead. With panic reaching fever pitch the other villages in Belthangady taluk decided to boycott Patrame. Said the village panchayat Chairman Vasudeva Shabbaraya: "It was like a graveyard."

Health officials were finally able to solve the mystery. The first clue came when labourers working in surrounding forests reported that they had spotted at least five dead monkeys. Specialists from Shimoga's Viral Research Laboratory were called in and blood samples from 10 victims were taken. The brain of a dead monkey was also taken for analysis. After this doctors went into the forests late at night to collect tiny black spider-shaped ticks which can be carriers of the suspected disease.

One week later, on January 25, the Shimoga laboratory found that four of the 10 blood samples responded positively to the tests. They then confirmed that the epidemic had been caused by the dreaded 'monkey disease' which has been endemic to Shimoga but had appeared for the first time now in Dakshina Kannada almost 150 km away. By the time the disease was diagnosed 21 people had died and 146 had been hospitalised.

The monkey disease was first noticed in Sorab district's Kyansur forest. It is believed to have originated in the USSR where it is called Russian spring-summer encephalitis. Apparently brought to India by migratory birds it is known here as the Kyansur Forest Disease (KFD). The disease is believed to exist in birds and other animals like pigs which transmit it to ticks. The ticks acting as carriers bite monkeys and human beings and infect them. The early symptoms are high fever for about 10 days along with bodyache, pain in the joints, conjunctivitis and bleeding through the nose and the anus.

Annual Toll: As there is no vaccine, treatment can only be symptomatic. Death occurs in about 5 per cent of the cases but is more likely in a victim already weakened by some other disease. If caught early it is possible to have a full recovery. The disease is reported regularly in Sagar, Shikarpur and Hosanagar in Shimoga and has spread to Uttara Kannada taluks like Sirsi and Honnavar. At least five people every year die of the KFD of the hundreds afflicted.

With statistics like this in the same state it is amazing that it took health officials as long as it did to diagnose and curb the disease. The lack of preparedness was highlighted when Belthangady's primary health centre was unable to deal with the number of patients and Veerendra Hegde, high priest of Dharmasthala, opened his TB hospital to KFD victims. The state Government, in an attempt to wipe out their earlier neglect, detailed 150 health workers to Belthangady. Two mobile hospitals have been sent to tour the five badly affected villages of Patrame, Nidle, Dharamsthala, Belal and Ujjaire.

The scare was so great that within a fortnight 1,000 people had reported for check-ups. To allay fears district officials printed 25,000 pamphlets in Kannada explaining the nature and symptoms of the disease. People were asked not to go into the forests and if they did, to cover themselves well and have a hot bath on return. The felling of trees was suspended. Fortunately by the first week of February the epidemic seemed to have subsided and no fresh cases were reported.

Predictably, the Congress(I), in its new role as the main Opposition in the state, tried to capitalise on the initial sluggishness of the district officials. General Secretary B. Subbayya Shetty toured the affected villages and reported that about 100 people had died in contrast to the official toll of 22. The next day Veerappa Moily, leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, admitted that not more than 15 in excess of the official figure had died. Moily added that he wanted the state Government to award compensation to the victims. This was not considered possible as people in the districts where the disease was endemic would also demand compensation. It is health officials, however, who have the biggest problem—eradication of the disease. Admitted Dr A. Padmanabha Murthy, a district health officer, pessimistically: "It will be a miracle if we can eradicate it from Belthangady. KFD is here to stay."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA in Belthangady

Patients at Hegde's hospital: belated diagnosis

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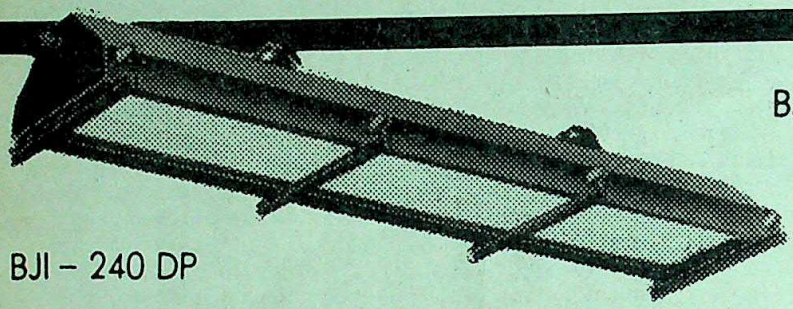

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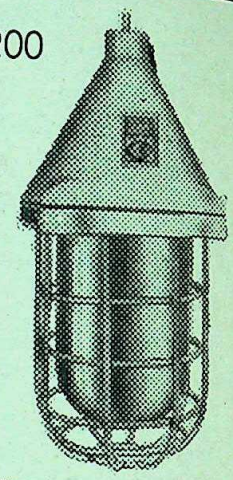

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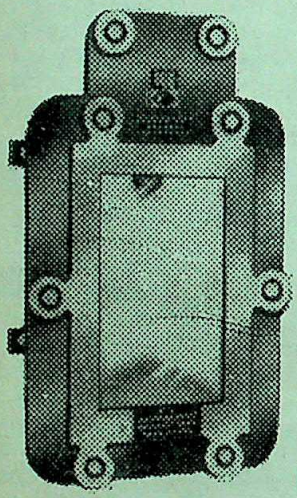

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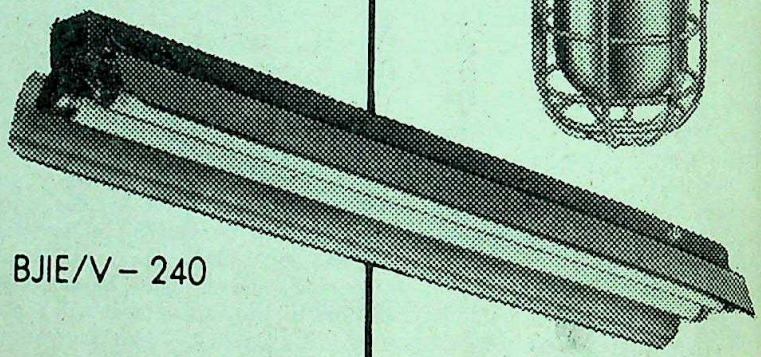

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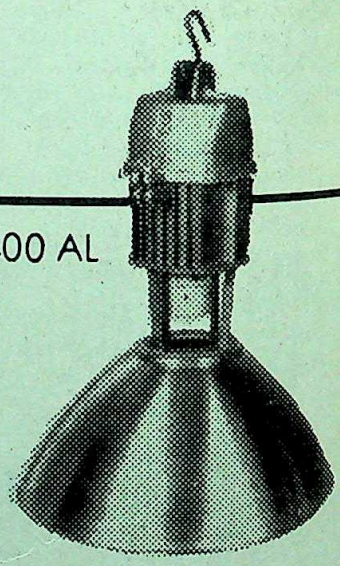

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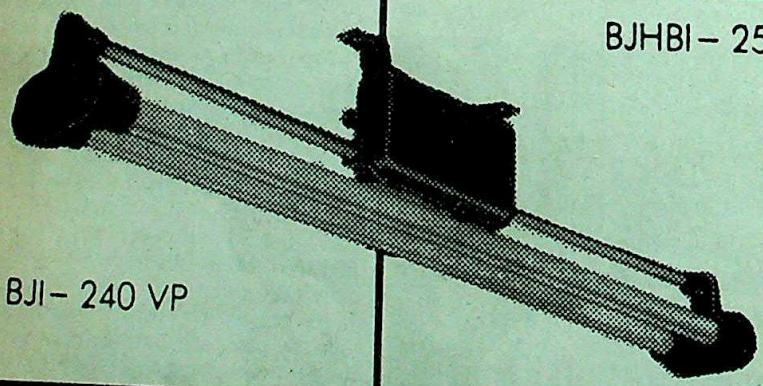

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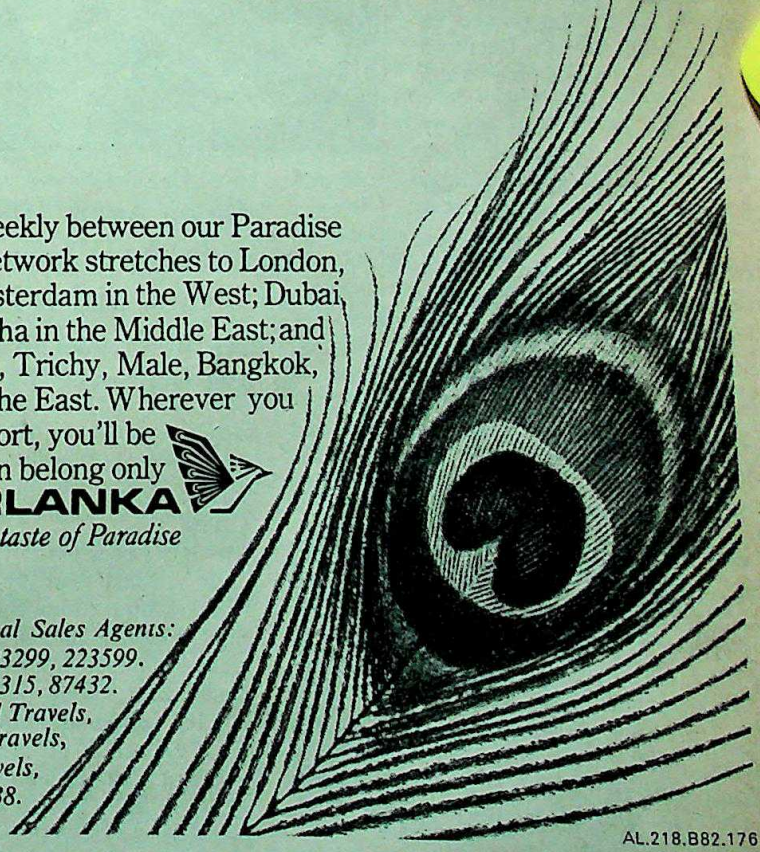

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INDIAN AIR FORCE

A Dangerous Drift

THE PILOTS of the Indian Air Force (IAF) have other problems besides the F-16s now standing on Pakistani airfields. In the last two months, over a dozen of their airplanes and helicopters have tumbled out of the sky, killing over half a dozen officers and adding up to a total loss of over Rs 5 crore. This frightening toll of men and machines only confirms the growing suspicion that the IAF is accident-prone. Since April 1982, its flying machines have been involved in over 35 accidents, and it has had to write off 25 airplanes and helicopters. Worse, it has lost over 15 senior officers.

According to Defence Ministry sources, with 3.2 air accidents every 10,000 flying hours, the IAF tops the list of air forces struggling with the problem. The number of accidents rose to 45 during 1980–81, from 32 during 1978–79. Says Suresh Kalmadi, Congress(S) Rajya Sabha member and a former IAF pilot: "It is really a shocking state of affairs. The morale of the Air Force is at rock-bottom because of the growing number of air accidents. We have lost more planes in peace-time than we had during the 1971 Indo-Pak war in which only 72 planes were destroyed."

Recurring Failures: Recent examples of accidents are:

► January 29, 1983: Two trainer aircraft on sorties crashed in the districts of Nalgonda and Rangareddy in Andhra Pradesh. One of them, a Kiran, belonged to the Hakeempet Air Force Station, and came down when the pilot and a Zambian trainee pilot noticed smoke in the rear of the plane and bailed out to safety. Both aircraft were completely destroyed.

► January 24, 1983: A fighter aircraft crashed near Pune, Maharashtra, killing 35-year-old Wing Commander Asher.

► January 19, 1983: An IAF jet crashed near Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, soon after it left base. The pilot survived.

► December 30, 1982: An Ajeet trainer crashed and broke up at Veppanapally in Dharampuri in Tamil Nadu, during routine trials. The pilot, Squadron Leader D.K. Pawar, was killed.

► December 29, 1982: An IAF helicopter on a routine flight crashed at Maery near Gangtok, Sikkim, killing Wing Commander Y. Prakash, Captain S. Singh, Captain R. Tandon, Wing Commander K.S. Cheema and Colonel V.K. Mehra.

► November 26, 1982: An Mi-8 helicopter crashed near Lunglee in Mizoram. It was returning to its Kumbhirgram base near Silchar after dropping supplies for forward posts. Among those killed were Flight Lieutenant R. K. Nandi, Squadron Leader R.D. Sharma, Flight Lieutenant L.N. Sharma, Gunner B.K. Nanda, Major Lamba, Captain J.K. Mishra and Captain Ghosh.

► November 16, 1982: An IAF aircraft crashed near Manmad near Nasik, Maharashtra, following engine failure. The pilot, Flight Lieutenant Ramesh Malhotra, escaped unhurt. Malhotra was returning to Delhi after taking part in the Air Force Golden Jubilee air show in Pune.

The makes of aircraft and helicopters involved in the accidents are a closely guarded secret, but Defence Ministry sources say that five MiG and three Ajeet trainers were among the machines that fell from the

Since April 1982, its flying machines have been involved in over 35 accidents, and it has had to write off 25 airplanes and helicopters. Worse, it has lost over 15 senior officers.

Contributing Factors: Although Government is keeping quiet about the disasters, Defence Minister R. Venkataraman did refer to the problem in a speech during the last session of the Lok Sabha, calling flight safety an important aspect of operational preparedness, the minister said: "In 1981–82 the IAF achieved the lowest record of accidents. During the current year, there has been an increase in accidents. Accidents are due to: weather conditions, bird menace, mechanical defects and pilot error."

Defence experts and Opposition members cite other factors. First, there is the mental and psychological tension the pilots suffer because of the satisfactory salaries—compared to their Indian Airlines and Air India counterparts—limited promotion opportunities and long working hours. For example, each IAF pilot receives a flying bounty of Rs 750 besides his pay, but over half of it is eaten up by insurance premiums and other expenses. Over 90 per cent of the pilots retire as wing commanders, a testimony to the fact that promotion is sluggish in the armour arm of the services.

Apart from this, training is reportedly not as rigorous as it should be. Significantly, more than half of the accidents involved pilots with two to five years of service. Says Jaswant Singh, Bharatiya Janata Party member of the Rajya Sabha and a former army officer: "Besides the generally poor working conditions, it is believed that the IAF has drastically curtailed its expenditure on training schedules as an economy measure following the sharp hikes in oil prices."

Wasteful Delay: The undue delay in choosing new and modern aircraft also poses training problems. It takes the Government an estimated seven to nine years before it settles on a particular airplane. Meanwhile, the training programme is keyed to another type of aircraft and when the new planes arrive the pilots have to learn the ropes for the new plane all over again. For example, the Mirage was offered to India

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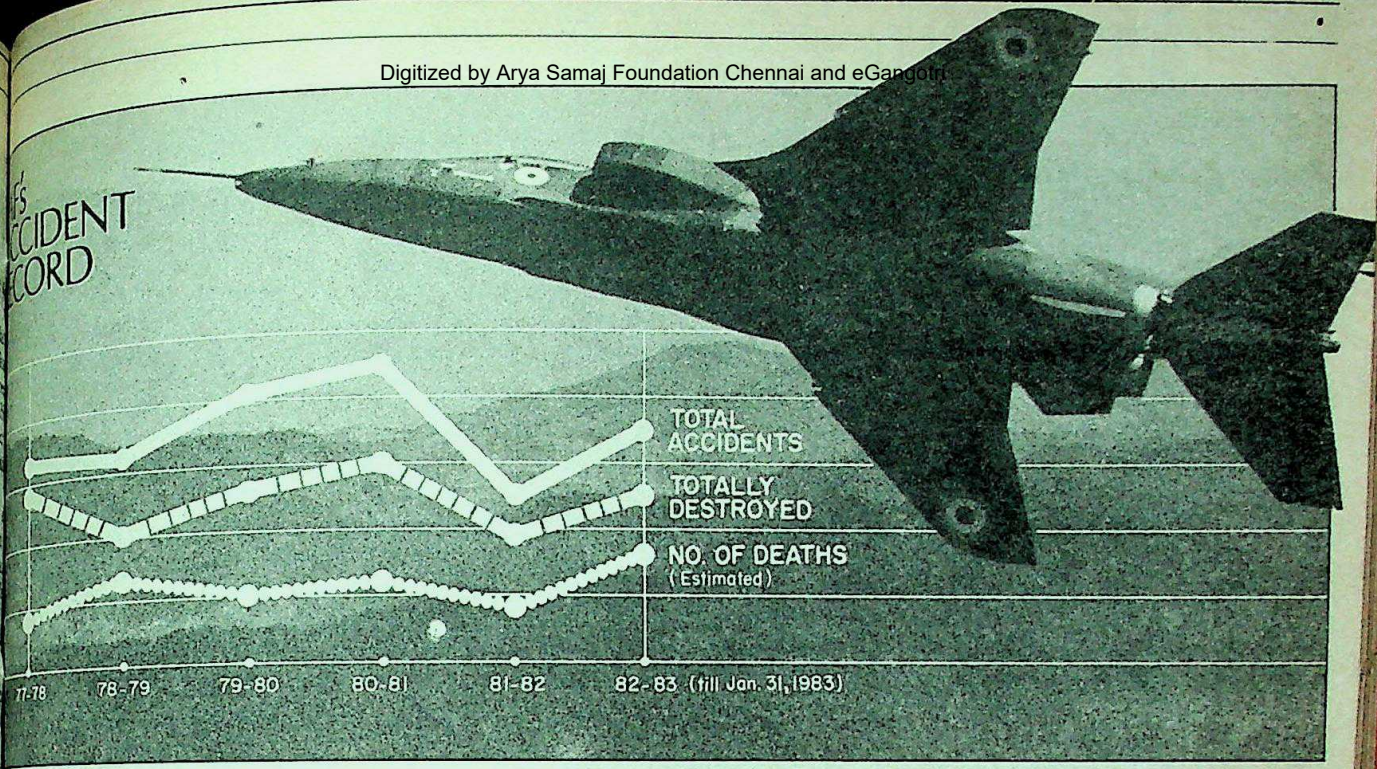

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maior factor responsible for the cra-
the obsolete aircraft such as the AN-
the Fairchild Packet. The IAF plan-
phase out the Packets by 1967 and
N-12s by 1975, but the aircraft
in service. Last year all the Packets
ounded owing to mechanical defects.
a Defence Ministry official: "Due to
al constraints, some planes have been
d. Anyhow, aircraft in the IAF, like
politicians, don't retire gracefully."
d strikes were mentioned in Venka-
n's speech and it is true that during
? eight aircraft—including one
—worth Rs 17 crore were des-
when a bird came in the way. How-
me circles feel that birds are only part
e story. Says Kalmadi: "Engine
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the accident enquiry reports on the table of the House. After Kalmadi raised a calling attention motion on the subject on November 3, 1982, Venkataraman refused to give details of the crashes saying: "There are matters which have some strategic value and by convention we have not been disclosing many items of information relating to defence.... I cannot give the number or figures with regard to accidents."

Opposition members disagree vehemently. Asks Kalmadi: "What is so secret about these accidents in which many women become widows and many mothers lose their sons? They are entitled to know the causes for the mishaps. It is done everywhere in the world and enquiry reports are made public so that the relatives can take action if the accidents occurred through administrative failure."

Kalmadi quotes a recent report on air accidents in the United States. The United States Air Force ordered a high-level study of 10 crashes which took place between January 1981 and June 1981. The investigators even interviewed 88 wives and 148 air crew members. They found that long working hours, numerous alerts, excessive temporary duty and family problems caused stress which ultimately led to accidents. Asks Kalmadi: "Will our government follow the same method?"

Venkataraman: keeping quiet

Secret Report: The authorities are more concerned than they reveal. Air Marshal D.A. Lafontaine, senior air staff officer, Western Air Command, was asked in June 1982 to examine "the causes of human failures among air crew, ground crew and support personnel which lead to accidents; selection, training and motivation of those directly concerned with flying—pilots, technical officers and technicians; availability of training aids and equipment in the training establishments and operational units and other possible connected weak areas." Although defence officials refuse to discuss Lafontaine's findings and recommendations, he has reportedly suggested improvements in training facilities and better promotional avenues for the crew. The report advises more funds for housing, a higher flying bounty, retirement benefits and enhanced separation allowances.

Air Force experts feel that training facilities require urgent attention. At present, aircraft and other equipment are ordered first and personnel training follows. Admitted a retired pilot: "We are asked to handle an aircraft only when it lands in India. It takes time to understand a sophisticated machine and maintain it in perfect condition."

The wheels of government are moving, albeit slowly. After the heated discussion in Parliament the Government has activated its Environmental Committee to look into the bird menace and advise the various civic bodies on preventing the concentration of garbage and eating establishments near airfields. It has also been decided to look into the financial aspects of providing more promotional avenues. Going by the record, however, IAF aircraft will continue to resemble flying coffins before the dangerous drift is checked.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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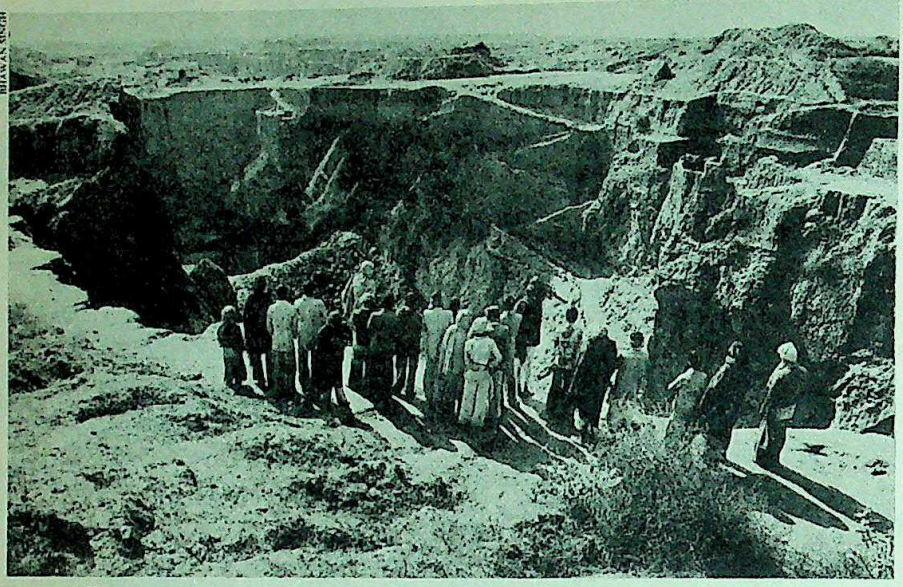

BHAWAN SINGH

Workers gather round the site where the tragedy occurred: macabre events

DSIDC

Graveyard Of Greed

FOR LABOURERS engaged in the bleak and forbidding Bhatti mines of Mehrauli, on the periphery of Delhi, the possibility of death through caveins is a constant companion. The jagged, red quarries stretching over several thousand acres have now become a veritable graveyard for scores of workers digging for badarpur and silica at the bottom of the steep pits. Ironically enough, the mines, which are classified by the Directorate of Mines Safety as the "most dangerous" in the northern India division, are located under the very nose of the Central Government.

Though declared "unsafe" since 1970 under Section 22(3) of the Mines Act, the Bhatti mines continue to be ruthlessly exploited by its greed-mad owners who bring in migrant labour from neighbouring states despite repeated admonitions from the Labour Ministry. But the real irony lies in the fact that the mines are not owned by individuals but by the state, or, more precisely, the Delhi Administration's Delhi State Industrial Development Corporation (DSIDC) which has, for years, been flouting the law with macabre impunity. A list of events in the mines just last month alone are indicative of the blatant exploitation and disregard for safety standards.

► January 10: Mashaq Ali and Raji Ali are crushed to death as the upper portion of the mine they are working in collapses. The contractor, who has hired them, flees from the site.

► January 11: A DSIDC labour welfare officer, Hassan, registers first information report (FIR) against one of the mine contractors, Khajjan Singh, for continuing to extract badarpur from a quarry in danger of collapsing.

► January 16: Swami Agnivesh, president of the Mazdoor Union, and Inder Mohan of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, lead a group of workers to demonstrate against working conditions in the Bhatti mines. They carry the corpse of the accident victim.

► January 18: R.P. Sharma, a DSIDC mining engineer, orders Khajjan Singh to stop work immediately on the quarry mentioned in the FIR. Singh abuses the DSIDC official, ignores the instruction and orders the workers to continue digging.

Even though the mines have been declared unsafe, several thousand labourers engaged by 200 contractors continue to work the mines with the full knowledge and blessings of the DSIDC, which profits handsomely from the material they extract.

► January 19: A meeting is held by the Labour Ministry and attended by representatives of the Ministries of Home, Industry and Directorate of Mines Safety and the Administration. The meeting agrees that something should be done about the Bhatti mines. No decision, however, is taken.

► January 24: The inevitable tragedy takes place. The 100-foot quarry being worked by Khajjan Singh collapses. Three men and a five-year-old boy are buried under the debris. Two others are seriously injured. The tragedy would have been worse for the fact that it was lunch time and most workers had left the quarry. Khajjan Singh mounts his motorcycle and speeds away.

The blame for the tragedy does not lie solely with Khajjan Singh. The DSIDC seems content in the belief that complying with the law simply means registering FIRs and issuing notices to the contractors. Further, even though the mines have been declared unsafe, several thousand labourers engaged by 200 contractors continue to work the mines with the full knowledge and blessings of the DSIDC, which profits handsomely from the material they extract.

Rati Ram, a blind old man whose son Devi Lal and son-in-law Prabhabhatu died in the latest accident, certainly has no faith in the DSIDC or in the Government's ability to protect the workers. Huddled in a blanket outside his hut, he says bitterly that he has yet to receive the promised compensation of Rs 5,000 announced by the DSIDC and has to raise the Rs 1,500 required for a tractor to extricate the dead bodies from the debris. His son was to have been married later this month. "Who cares for us labourers?" he wept. "My son is gone. What have I got left?"

Twelve-year-old Koel, whose spine was badly damaged in a mine accident earlier in the month, refuses to go back to work in the mines but her mother, Champa Devi says she has no choice. "How can we eat if we do not go back to work? We have to pay the contractor much money still."

Meanwhile, with the mounting public outcry following the January 24 tragedy the mines were shut down for a fortnight and a court of inquiry set up to look into the workings. But if past history is any indication, it will clearly be merely a temporary closure. Each time a major disaster occurs in the mines, they are shut down and the Delhi Administration promptly announces that the notorious contractor system will be abolished and safety measures instituted. But each time, the mines have been reopened and the ubiquitous contractors back on the scene.

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Agnivesh (centre) leads a protest against the working conditions: blatant exploitation

Changeover: The public eyewash by the has now become almost routine. In ber 1975, following the intervention ay Gandhi, the Delhi Administration nced that the mines had been taken y the DSIDC. In 1980, after a series of ents, Lt-Governor Jagmohan announ- that the mines were being taken over by DC to improve safety measures. A na- daily mocked the news with the headli- "DSIDC takes over DSIDC."

It was only in 1978 that the DSIDC took tial step of hiring qualified supervisory but even they have been unable to get ntractors to build benches (steps) while prisingly, 90 per cent of the accidents because of sides caving in for lack of ts. Consequently, charges that the and the contractors are in collusion been increasingly aired.

Swami Agnivesh alleges that the partia- shown to the contractors by the Delhi inistration is deliberate and that they hand-in-glove with local politicians. He to the fact that Sajjan Kumar, the gress(I) MP from the area, has intervened on behalf of the contractors. Kumar, ever, flatly denies this. "I acted as a me- in 1980 between the contractors and and suggested an agreement in which measures would be implemented by contractors. If the mines had remained ed, the workers would have starved," he But when asked if the safety measures normally been implemented, he admits has not visited the mines since 1980. The DSIDC officials, on the other hand, not prepared to comment on the mines to ers which is hardly surprising conside- their role in the macabre affair. Their ch, however, goes far beyond safety measures. Since 1980 no agreement has been signed between the DSIDC and the contractors owing to a dispute over the amount to be deposited by the latter. This really means that mining in the area is, in fact, illegal. Since 1978, according to official figures, 41 deaths have taken place in the mines but so far not a single family has received benefits under the Workmen's Compensation Act.

Barbaric Treatment: In fact, the mines operate under a blatant system of bonded labour. The contractors provide advance payments to the workers to buy mules for transporting the extract, then arbitrarily deduct amounts from the Rs 70 per truckload that is paid to the workers. "None of us can read or write so we have no idea how much we have paid or how much is left to pay," says Dhan Singh, a labourer at the mines. The result is that the labourers are indebted to the contractors and are unable to stop working. Further, no drinking water is supplied and the workers have to pay Rs 5 per drum of water in winter and double that amount in the summer months. The miserable living conditions and tattered clothes are a mute testimony to the barbaric treatment meted out to the workers. Every family has a child from the age of seven onwards working in the mines.

But, for the DSIDC, whose chairman incidentally is the chief secretary of Delhi, the Bhatti mines represent the goose that lays golden eggs. It earns an estimated monthly revenue of Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 lakh from the mines, and as far as they are concerned the choice between the death of a few unknown workers and somebody killing the golden goose is obviously heavily loaded in favour of the latter.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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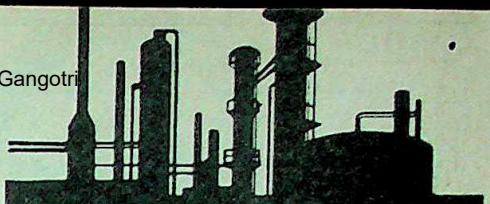

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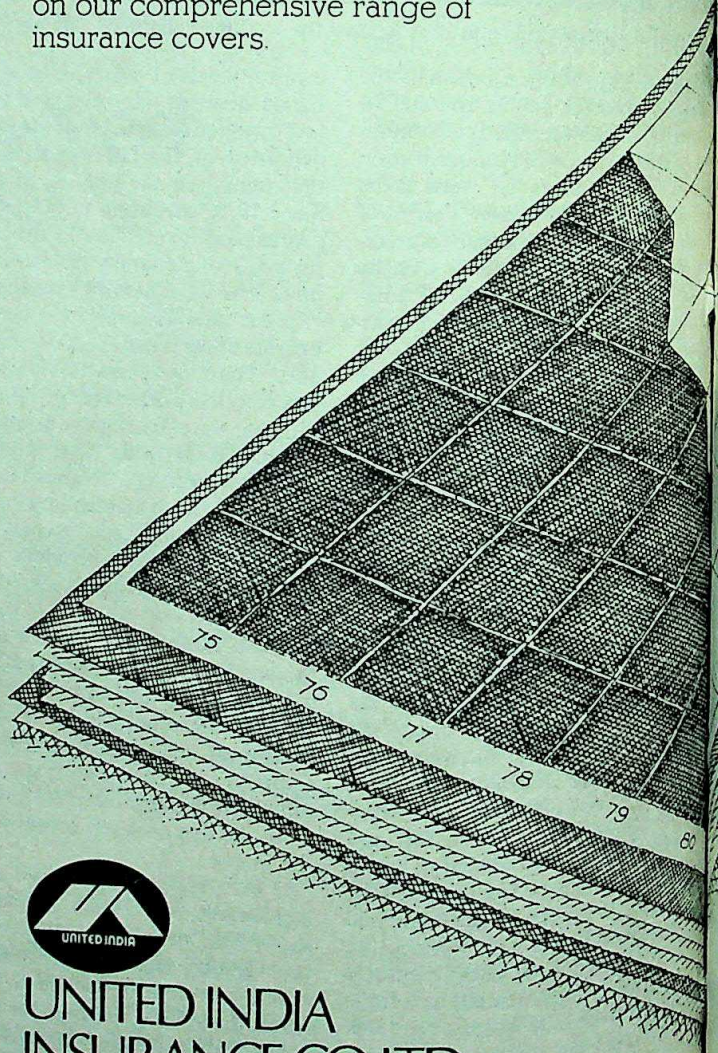

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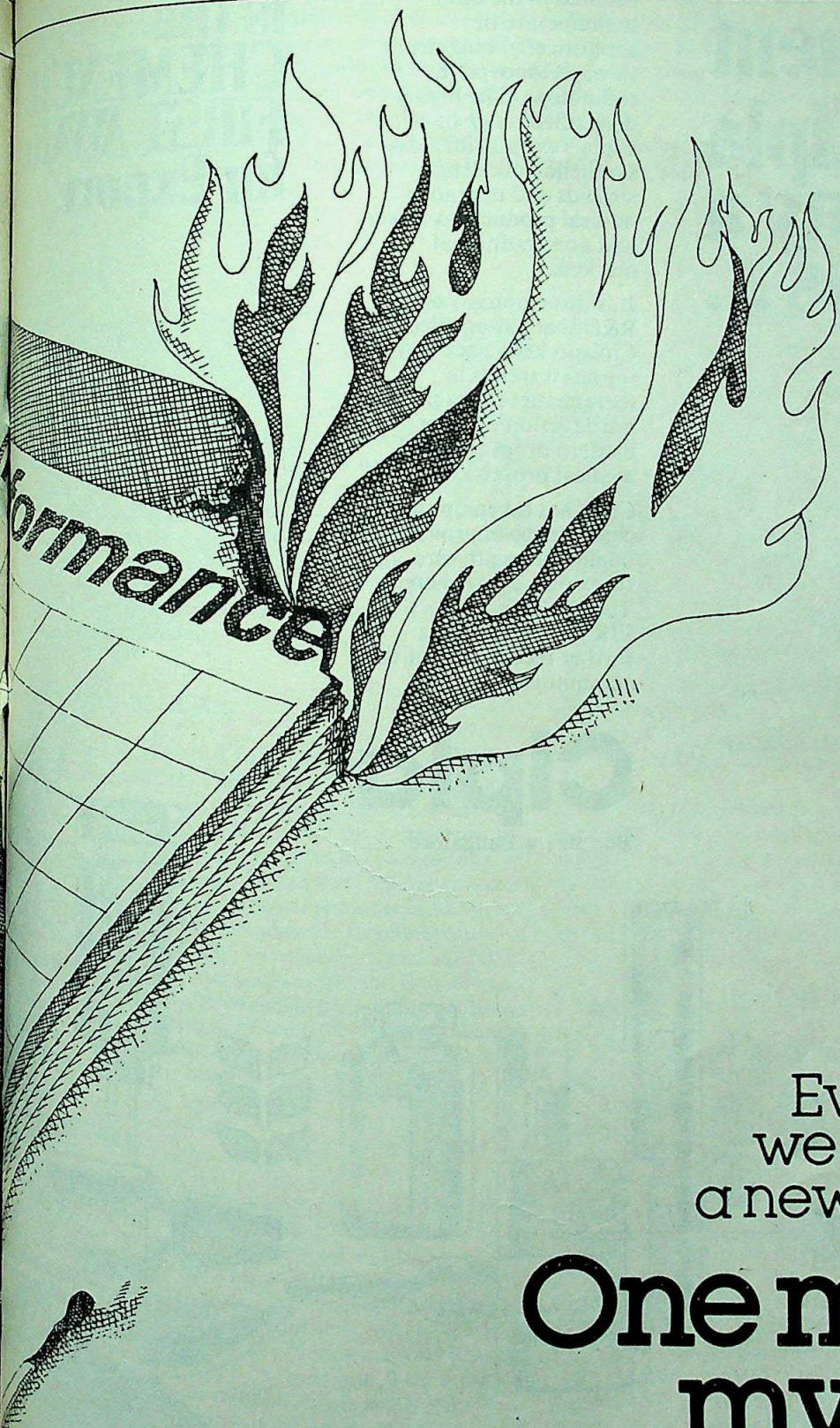

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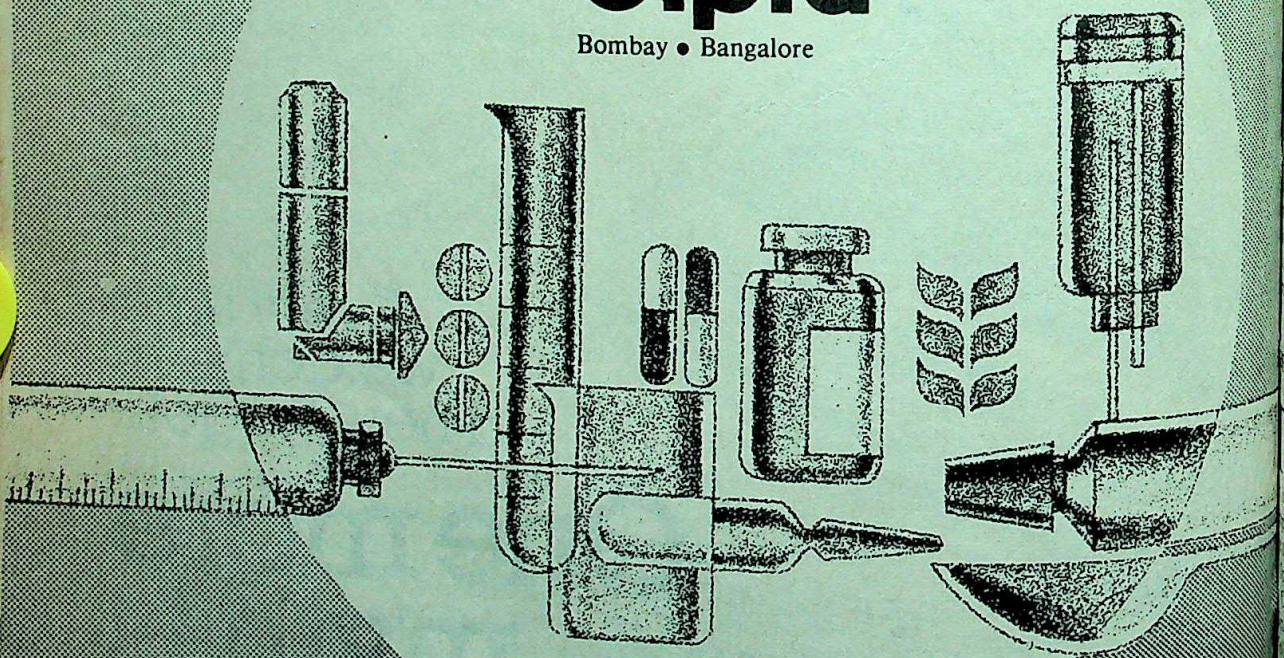

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NORTHERN TRENDS

THE TRADITIONAL levers of balance in the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) are shifting, with the north asserting its right to a greater say in running the country's premier business lobby. The presidentship and vice-presidentship of the federation, traditionally given by rotation to the four regions, will now fall more often to the north, which in the process comes on par with the west and east. In a parallel change, the north will also get greater representation on FICCI's expanded executive committee. As industrialists from the north see it, these changes were necessary because of the rapid industrialisation of the region over the past three decades. The adjustments in FICCI are, however, being made as a part of an informal understanding, without any change in the organisation's constitution. This is seen as a concession to the southern region, which has been told it can get a greater say in FICCI affairs if it enrols more members.

ASING MANIA

A NUMBER of industrial houses are considering forays into leasing finance. The TVS group was the first large house to enter the field (INDIA TODAY, August 31, 1982). And this may soon be followed by the Lalbhais. The Modis are planning to hive out capital in a similar fashion, but without forming a separate company. The banks are similarly considering a diversification into this quasi-banking activity. The State Bank of India was first to make its intentions known, but it is the Bank of India that has got off the mark first by proposing to acquire a 30 per cent stake in a new leasing company to be promoted by another company that is already in the business, 20th Century Leasing. The term-lending financial institutions are also likely to follow suit: the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India is planning to jump into the leasing business.

MOVING ROAD-BLOCKS

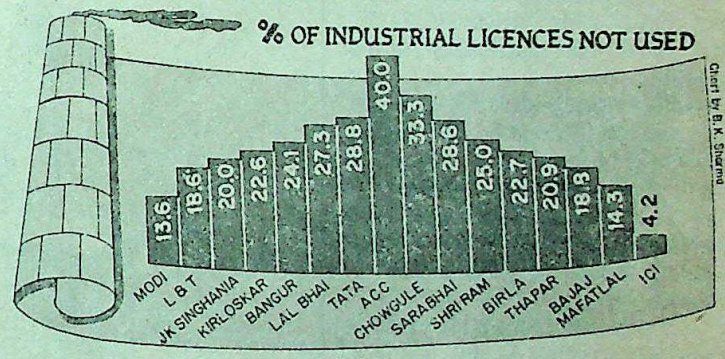
FRESH steps are on the anvil to try and attract remittances from non-resident Indians. This follows the poor response to the series of measures announced last year, offering new avenues of investment to Indians abroad. This time round, however, the focus will be not on fresh financial incentives but on removing the road-blocks in the way of a greater remittance flow. The Government realises that a very small part of the total remittances so far has come from the more affluent Indians abroad, largely because of bureaucratic hurdles, poor servicing of enquiries from interested parties and other non-financial disincentives. All this is quite apart from the general lack of knowledge of the investment opportunities available. Proposals are now being considered for changing this state of affairs, the assumption being that the financial incentives in themselves are now sufficiently attractive.

OBEROIS EXPAND

THE OBEROIS plan to diversify from their traditional hotel business into other pastures, most probably the related processed foods industry. The details are still being worked out, but what will be the first such case of a major domestic hotel group seeking to spread its risks, but the company is expected to take the plunge in the next few months. Meanwhile, after concentrating for some years on expanding their hoteliering activities abroad, the Oberois are now concentrating on enlarging their domestic interests. A new Oberoi hotel is opening shortly in Bhubaneswar, to be followed by a 200-room venture in Bangalore. Negotiations are on for other hotels to be located in Hyderabad and Jaipur, and yet other locations could be Madras, Cochin, Varanasi and Agra.

LICENSING LOOPHOLES

IF PROOF were needed of the purposelessness of the industries licensing system, it comes from a study by the Indian Institute of Public Administration in New Delhi. The Birlas did not use 50 of the 220 licences they got, while in another 38 cases less than 25 per cent of licensed capacity was used. The Tatas' record was worse: 97 of 198 licences were either not used or used less than 25 per cent.



The story is repeated in the case of most of the other large industrial houses. Taking 17 of the biggest industrial houses as a group, 77 per cent of the licences were either not used at all or used up to less than 60 per cent of licensed capacity. Licensing clearly fails to serve its basic function, of channelling investment into the desired areas for the creation of the required production capacities.

TYRE CONCESSIONS

KESORAM Industries and Cotton Mills Ltd seems to have done its tax sums carefully in deciding to go in for a large tyre project. A tax concession given by the Government in November in order to benefit three existing tyre companies could now benefit the Birla-owned Kesoram Industries more than anybody else. Under the excise concession scheme, covering only those tyre units that started production after March 1976 (and before April 1984), Kesoram could get back fully half its Rs 87 crore capital cost, over and above the normal 25 per cent investment allowance as well as a 7.5 per cent tax holiday. Since the unit will be located in the backward Medak district, the project will be eligible for a number of other concessions as well.

The Birlas can confidently expect to get back more than Rs 60 crore from just two of these concessions. Till Kesoram Industries decided to enter the field, the only three companies that stood to benefit from the excise concession were Apollo, JK Tyres and Vikrant Tyres. In all, a tax write-off of close to Rs 90 crore will go into the coffers of these four companies.

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PRICES

Oil That Glitters...

LAST WEEK, as most of us were otherwise engrossed—trying to figure out the meaning of the Congress(I) upset in the south or having a go at the likely outcome of the poll in Delhi—newspapers all over the world, including one or two in India, were concerned with the serious turn in the latest crisis to hit the world economy. They carried the following news items:

► The oil market is in a crunch and prices may go down by 30 per cent to as little as $25 a barrel in the next few months.

► The pound sterling sank into what a London economist termed as the 'black hole' price of $1.50, the lowest since currencies started floating.

► Oil is losing out to gold which has shot up in price by 25 per cent since mid-November, and by more than 60 per cent since mid-1982.

► The rupee too is sinking and the inter-bank rate fell to an all-time low of almost Rs 10 a dollar on February 4.

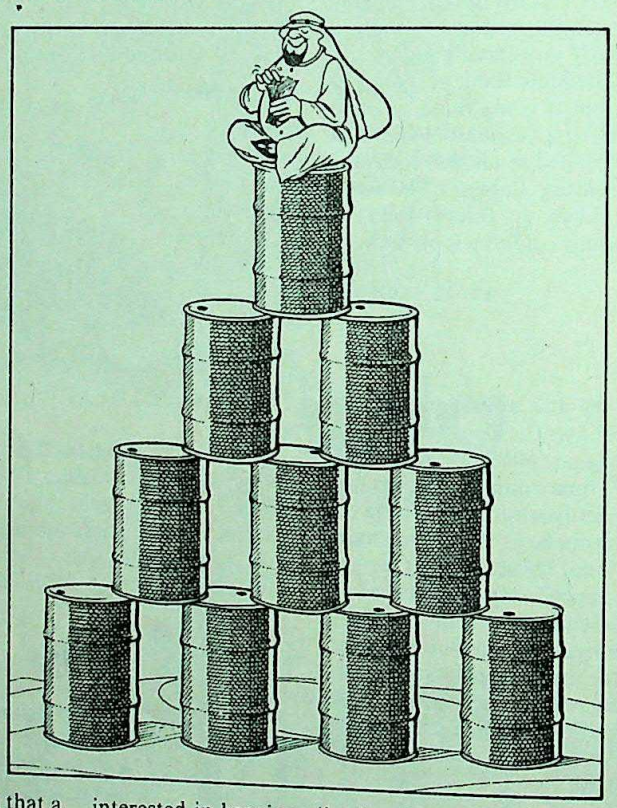
Is there any connection between these news items? Is, for instance, the sharp fall in oil prices linked with the fall of the rupee (in international terms)? And what does all this portend for India?

Let us start backwards and take the sinking rupee and the gold price first. Lenin once said—the things he said could fill a Bible, not his favourite book—that he would make gold so cheap and irrelevant that it would be fit only for lining lavatory walls. Some Arabs are apparently using it for the same purpose but most of the gold is finding its way back into bank vaults at prices so astronomical that a cow would have to jump over the moon to get at it.

In 1973–74 and 1978–79 when the OPEC detonated its two oil price fuses, oil became dearer and scarcer day by day. Everyone knew or thought that oil was as good as gold, or better than gold. There is indeed a link between the two; before oil prices soared, an ounce of gold bought around 20 barrels of oil (gold was pegged at $35 per ounce). But the Arabs turned the tables on their customers and the link snapped. Oil pushed ahead faster than gold and gold prices went haywire.

More recently, oil went into a glut and the price has fallen sharply. And as oil prices fell, gold prices began going up. Gold prices shot up from around $300 an ounce (Rs 950 per 10 gm) in June last to $500 an ounce last week. So gold is at present worth something like 17 barrels of oil, instead of 20.

Oil Disarray: Is gold cheap, or oil dear? There are reports that the falling oil prices would stabilise around $25 a barrel, which would indeed bring the oil-gold parity back to 20 barrels an ounce. But it all depends on the bankers, the oil companies, and, of course, the OPEC countries, all of whom are interested in keeping oil prices high. Major oil companies are as frightened by the collapse of oil prices, as are bankers, and for similar reasons. Both have made a lot of money— at one time Exxon's profits were so high there was talk of excess profits tax in Washington—and would be hit badly if the flow of money shrank abruptly. Eventually, as the world economy picks up, oil prices might well recover, but it looks as if gold will lead the way for a long time to come. When banks and countries go bust, you can rely only on gold—and little else. As long as the disarray in oil continues, gold prices should be expected to keep going up, probably as high as $600 an ounce.



How would that affect India? Gold prices in India don't move up and down with international prices. When the London gold price was hovering around $300 an ounce, that is, Rs 950 per 10 gm, the Bombay price was close to Rs 1,600 per 10 gm, yielding a premium of about Rs 650 per 10 gm. This must have whetted the appetite of smugglers and there is indeed evidence that a lot of gold was smuggled in. Recently, however, the gold price abroad has risen to around $500 an ounce (or Rs 1,600 per 10 gm), while the Indian price is Rs 1,750 per 10 gm, which has sliced the premium down to a quarter (Rs150 for 10 gm). This could not be attractive enough for the smugglers. Does this mean that gold prices in India are under pressure to move up? This may be one reason why the Indian rupee is going down in terms of the dollar, and may go down further.

In India, however, gold prices are linked not with oil, of which the country has very little, but with wheat. A gram of gold buys about 80–100 kg of wheat, and has done so for centuries, for the Indian farmer, like his Arab counterpart elsewhere, wants to put his money into something more substantial than currency notes. The Indian farmer as well as the oilman prefer gold to rupees or dollars when things are uncertain. If the price of gold moves up, wheat prices should be expected to move up too, and, in fact, have been moving up since gold prices started going up. On the Hapur grain market near Delhi, good quality wheat is now quoted at Rs 250–255 a quintal, which gives a gold parity price of Rs 2,000–2,500 per 10 gm. One should therefore expect gold prices in India to move up by Rs 300 per 10 gm, not necessarily in response to international price movements but as a result of inflationary pressures at home. Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee is right when he says that inflation is his major worry.

There is thus a three-way link between oil, gold, and wheat (in India) and since the Arabs produce most of the oil, they have a dominant position to influence the price of wheat also.

Money Trading: Let us now look at the second item—the fall in the value of

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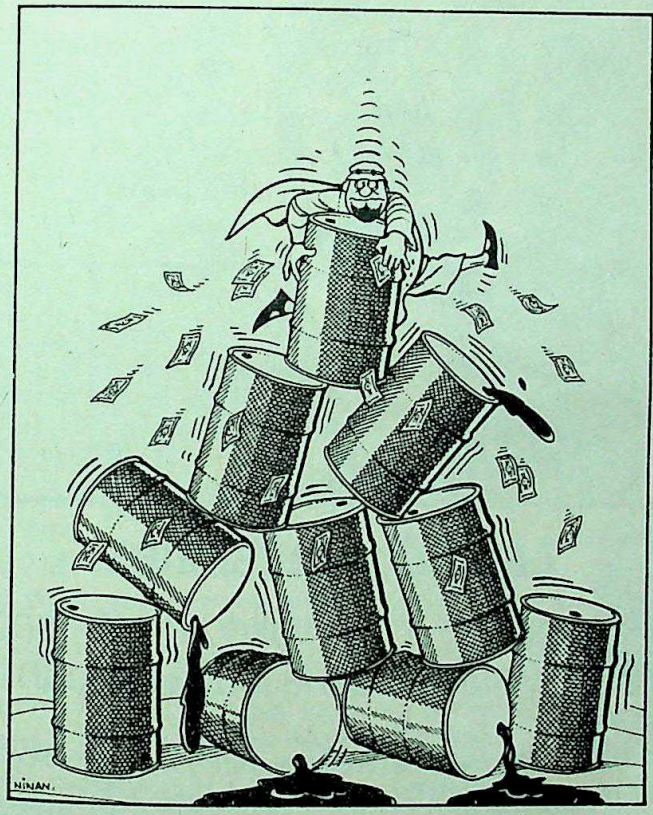
sterling. Here again, it does not mean the British economy is in such bad straits simply cannot sustain the value of its Since the end of the fixed-rate money has become a commodity to like cocoa or cotton or ground-Just as we make money buying and cotton, banks make money buying billions of dollars worth of cur-in just one day. An authoritative journal recently estimated that normal day, no less than $200 billion 00,000 crore) worth of currencies, equi-twice India's national income, are around the world, round the clock, Of this, only 10 billion is related and investment in currencies by The rest—95 per cent of a day's —is straightforward speculation.

Most of this speculation is done by themselves. Multination-General Motors, Interna-Business Machines (IBM) and companies are themselves no when it comes to gambling But the sums they play relatively small. The electro-gadgetry that is available to has also helped a great deal. shown into the foreign department of a Frank-which had eight employees telephones and telexes. The clattered on and the noisy at their desks placed their for buying and selling all currencies by the million. hectic 30-minute session, a bearded man put down his and walked off to the can-have a hamburger. He had bought and sold—$60 (Rs 60 crore) worth of cur-and made a profit of Rs 5 his employers—all in just

The fact that the pound sterling rupee is losing to the dollar mean that these currencies inherently weak. It may just that someone in Bombay or Delhi dollars very badly and the banks are to make hay by speculating. If the element was curbed, the prices not swing all that much, and there strict rules laid down by the banks. But international banks are so they can get round most rules, just do in the regulated commodity

There is no doubt the oil market is responsible for the way the cookie is but why is the oil cookie baked so by the powerful OPEC crumbling? OPEC first detonated the energy price explosion of 1973–74, the natural reaction of most economists was that the price rise was the equivalent of a tax on the rest of the world and the OPEC would be incapable of spending all those hundreds of billions of dollars of extra revenue. In order to keep the world economy going, the money could have to be 'recycled', as if it was some kind of a chemical, to countries in need. The 'recycling' would serve two purposes. One would be to maintain the levels of the world economic activity and the second object would be to use the money to invest in new sources of energy and thus reduce the dependence on oil.

Failed Alternatives: But things did not turn out quite as expected. OPEC proved to be big spenders, so big in fact that countries like Nigeria and Mexico overspent, hoping that the price of oil would go on rising in line with inflation. On the other hand, oil-importing industrial countries like the US, Japan and West Germany banked their fires, deflated their economies and tried to switch on to other fuel supplies. The net result was the unexpected collapse in demand for oil which has persistently gone down by 5 to 6 per cent a year in most major countries since the last oil shock. Consumption in 15 major industrial countries is now running at 7 million barrels per day, as against 9 million barrels five years ago. The forecast was actually 17 million barrels, which means that consumption is slightly over half the estimated demand. Most experts think that it will be another five years or so before demand catches up with available supplies once again.



What happens to countries like India in between? Firstly, it is likely that oil prices would stabilise around $30 a barrel, or maybe even less—a figure of $25 a barrel is frequently mentioned—for the next few years and this would benefit the world trade as well as consumers. The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which has done computer runs on various price assumptions has concluded that a 10 per cent fall in prices (around $3 a barrel) would boost the growth rate by 0.3 per cent in the first year and 0.6 per cent in the second year. Inflation would be reduced by up to 1 per cent in the second year. This applies more to industrialised countries than to the heavily indebted oil-importing countries but anything that helps growth overall should have a boosting effect on world trade and, to that extent, India and other similarly placed countries should stand to gain.

The difficulty is that the benefits take time to work through, while the disrupting effects happen quickly, reducing investment, destabilising currencies, and should the banks get worried, constricting lending. The disrupting effects would be even more marked if the oil prices plunged rather than dipped, for sharp fluctuations in prices are harder to get adjusted to than moderate changes. In fact, sharp falls in prices are worse than mild increases. It will be clear in the next few weeks whether another oil shock—in reverse—is in the offing, or whether things would get adjusted much more gradually.

The fall in oil prices also means a slowdown in economic activity in the oil countries of the Middle East and this would naturally affect India adversely. Contrary to popular impression, however, the bulk of the remittances from abroad are not from the Gulf but from Britain and the US, and these might increase rather than drop as a result of improved economic performance.

The best bet for India is to see that it cuts down its dependence on imported oil to the minimum. The world markets are obviously in a turbulent mood, and if it is not oil, it could be wheat or gold or silver tomorrow. The OPEC oilmen have now retired to their tents to brood over the present crisis that seems to have caught them unawares, but they will almost certainly strike again in about five years' time. New Delhi can't say it has not been warned.

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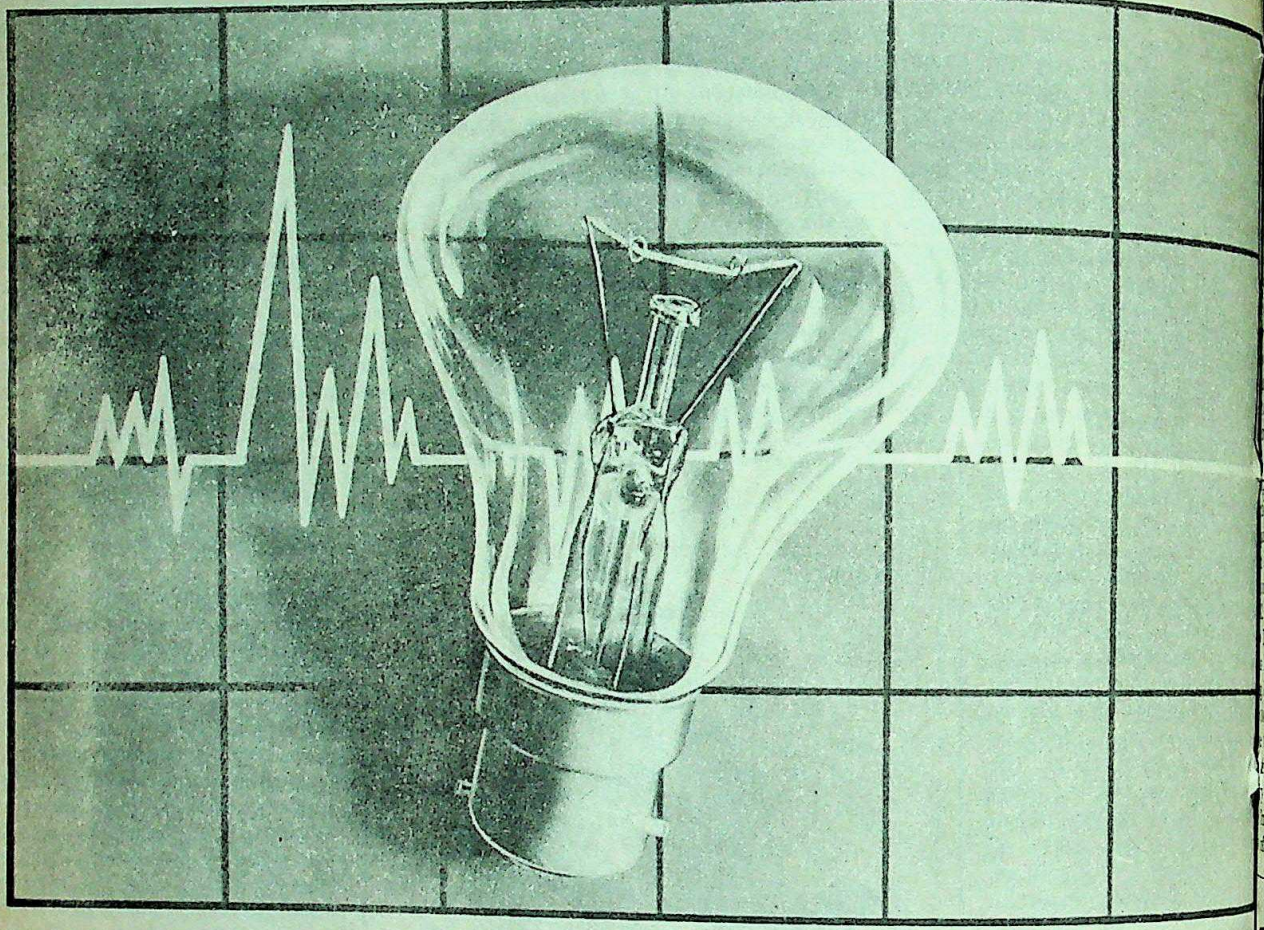

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ECONOMY

Conflicting Claims

IT HAS been a sorry end for what was grandly termed the year of productivi- Economic growth (GNP) is likely to less than 2 per cent. And with the tion growing faster, the average has become poorer over the year.

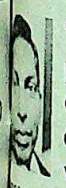
As the Government gets ready for the Budget Session of Parliament, the is sombre. And with good reason:

by a severe drought, agricultural tion is expected to slip from last 133 million tonnes. Most estimates year's harvest at less than 130 million

Industry, through most of the year, has of a recession. The official pro- index shows a recovery having August/September, but business- this. Production in many key has shown an absolute fall during

The foreign trade deficit will be more Rs 5,000 crore for the third year run- If it were not for the buffer provided by loan, the country would have been bankruptcy in its foreign payments with dollars enough to pay for one month's imports.

In a year devoted to productivity, the man-days through strikes and lock-



"The coming year promises to be a good one. If you study the cyclical pattern of the weather, the monsoons this year should be good. If this turns out to be true, everything will look up."

—C.H. HANUMANTHA RAO
member, Planning Commission

has soared to an all-time record. At an estimated 75 million, the figure has trebled in

The Government's tax collection has badly suffered because of the economy's sluggish performance. Revenues are running behind initial estimates, while expenditures have run way ahead. The result is a soaring budget deficit unless a dramatic improvement in the situation

There are several other problem areas: the power situation is critical in many states, the railway improvements have petered out, and production in vital areas like steel and coal has either fallen or stopped short of the target.

Discouragement: The business mood is pessimistic. Despite the mounting evidence of an industrial pick-up in recent months, industrialists talk of a deepening recession. Insisting that the official figures are mis-

"It is nonsense to talk of a sectoral recession. Any recession of this kind is bound to affect every industry....I don't see the situation improving for a couple of years."

—VINAY BHARAT RAM
deputy managing director, Delhi Cloth Mills

leading, L.M. Thapar, head of the Thapar group of industries, argues: "In virtually every major industry there is a recession. In textiles, 20 per cent of production has been lost for more than a year, but still there is no shortage. In paper, three large units and 20 small units are shut. But unsold stocks are higher than ever before. Engineering units are in a bad way, and the electrical industry is in a mess. Shipping is in a prolonged crisis. Any industry that is not doing badly is the exception."

K.N. Modi, chairman of the Modi group, adds his own list of problem industries: "Take any traditional industry and you will find a problem. The textiles case is well known. But look at jute, which is having a bad time. Or sugar. Production has increased sharply, but the industry is in a critical condition. In many other industries, I estimate that over 35,000 small and medium-scale companies are suffering."

V. Narayanan, managing director of Goodyear, sees the problem differently, but a problem nevertheless: "In my industry, tyres, the problem is one of too much capacity, so that demand is insufficient. We have been forced to cut the prices of truck tyres by 10 per cent at a time when costs have gone up." Narayanan points out that truck production has dropped by 20 per cent in 1982. N.R.N. Nalkur, finance director of Eicher Goodearth, says tractor production has similarly fallen by 20 per cent, from 83,051 in 1981 to 66,614.

Pessimistic Chorus: Vinay Bharat Ram, deputy managing director of Delhi Cloth Mills (DCM), is even more pessimistic than the others. "It is nonsense to talk of a sectoral recession. Any recession of this kind is bound to affect every industry. Take our large foundry unit, which is suffering because of the problem faced by tractors. And in cloth, we have been forced to cut down drastically on the production of high-value cloth. I don't see the situation improving for a couple of years."

D.H. Pai Panandikar, secretary-general of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), sums up the general business mood: "There is no question about it, industry is facing a demand recession. And the situation is getting worse. In some areas, this may have a lasting impact. The textile industry will never be the same again. As many as one lakh jobs in the industry have been permanently lost."

Adding to the chorus of gloom, the Punjab, Haryana and Delhi Chambers of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) said in a January review: "The current economic scene is characterised by deepening

"In my industry, tyres, the problem is one of too much capacity . . . so that We have been forced to cut the prices of truck tyres by 10 per cent at a time when costs have gone up."

—V. NARAYANAN
managing director, Goodyear

recessionary tendencies....Neither the short-term nor the medium-term economic outlook is encouraging."

How much of all this is professional breast beating and how much genuine concern it is difficult to say. Given the official evidence of stepped up industrial activity in recent months, the seemingly all-pervasive pessimism is difficult to understand.

Differing Views: But there are more hopeful voices that can be heard too. At a meeting organised in January by PHDCCI,

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M.M. Sabharwal, chairman of Bata India, argued (as does Narayanan of Goodyear) that in many industries which are complaining of recession, the real problem was not a drop in demand but over-capacity. Sabharwal went on to point out that some of the major headaches of the past have now ceased to be so: bank credit, for one. "I don't think anyone can say today that the availability of credit is a problem," Sabharwal told the PHDCCI meeting.

Those comments struck a responsive chord from N. Venkataraman of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham). Venkataraman says he is "reasonably optimistic" about the near-term future. "The outlook is not that bad. The poor kharif crop last winter has not had any impact on prices. And though there is a slackening of industrial demand, there has been no decrease. It is just that the growth has been slower."

"If the economy has shrunk, the Government should face the situation instead of staking its prestige on an increase in the plan outlay....The country has forgotten what financial discipline is."

—RAJA CHELLIAH, member, Economic Administration Reforms Commission

Arguing in the same vein, Bimal Jalan, chief economic adviser in the Finance Ministry, points out: "Industrial production in November 1982 was 5.5 per cent more than in November 1981. This is not at all a bad performance since November 1981 saw a 10 per cent increase over November 1980. I would say that industry is pulling out of the difficulties it faced a few months ago."

ONE EXPLANATION for the conflicting notes of optimism and pessimism struck by the Government and industry could lie with the coming budget. Industry could well be trying to forestall a fresh dose of heavy taxation by making out that they are already in deep water. And some of its pessimism could be pre-budget posturing aimed at wresting concessions. The Government in turn could be trying to play down whatever problems exist while it assesses what needs to be done.

But there is little doubt that power supply continues to be a bugbear. Dismissing official claims of power generation having increased by the targeted 7 per cent, Freddie Mehta, director of Tata Sons, said: "Power supply is genuinely nearing a state of total collapse. Tamil Nadu even now has a 75 per cent power cut. Gujarat has a 50 per cent cut. In Haryana, the picture is no better. Even Maharashtra is bad."

Across the country, the power crisis has reached proportions once known only in West Bengal. Some two million tonnes of cement production alone have been lost because of power shortages. And Narayanan of Goodyear confesses that his company is now going in for 100 per cent captive power generation. "It's going to cost us Rs 4 crore, and captive generation costs are three times higher."

Freddie Mehta of the Tatas sees a wider problem: "The improvements that we saw earlier in the economic infrastructure are now tapering off. Take the railways, which have become sluggish after their improvement earlier. The same is the case in other areas."

Shaky Finances: If industry thinks it faces a problem, the Government is equally up against the wall. The poor performance of the economy has resulted in lower-than-expected tax revenues. In an effort to ward off financial disaster, the Government sent out orders recently to rein in the spending. Though recent weeks have shown some improvement in the tax collection performance, government finances remain precarious.

One victim of this could be investment. And, willy-nilly, the limits on the Government's ability to invest have already shot down some of the most crucial targets set in the current five-year plan, scheduled to run on till March 1985. A mid-plan review, due three months ago, has been quietly postponed because the Government does not want to come out with embarrassing admissions. But the power plan may be cut to two-thirds of the original target of creating an additional 20,000 mw of generating capacity. The railways are screaming that unless they get more funds they cannot meet their target. But that has not got them the funds. And in foodgrains there has been virtually no progress at all since 1978–79.

"Take any traditional industry and you will find a problem. The textiles case is well known. But look at jute....Or sugar. Production has increased sharply, but the industry is in a critical condition."

—K.N. MODI chairman, Modi Group

In the present situation, with the economy in low gear, there are those who will say that the Government would be wise to slow down spending. Says Raja Chelliah, member of the Economic Administration Reforms Commission: "If the economy has shrunk, the Government should face the situation instead of staking its prestige on an increase in the plan outlay. You can't spend more than you have. The country has forgotten what financial discipline is."

Optimistic Forecast: For all these problems, however, economists in the Government and the Planning Commission

"In virtually every major industry there is a recession. In textiles, 20 per cent production has been lost for more than a year, but there is no shortage....Any industry that is not doing badly the exception."

—L. M. THAPAR head of the Thapar Group

tain a basic optimism. Jalan of the Finance Ministry takes the doomsday-soothsayers task for ignoring the many positive factors that he says should be obvious. "The drought last year created a major problem. But we have held prices in check. There has been no shortage of foodgrains because we arranged imports in time, and procurement has been better than before. This has been a difficult year, but the Central Government's plan outlay has increased by no less than [illegible] per cent. The next year's increase in outlay is also likely to be reasonable. The plan has not been cut. And whatever businessmen may say, industry is now doing better. Certain problems are bound to have been caused by the drought. But we have tackled the situation. I don't understand what all the hullaballoo is about."

C.H. Hanumantha Rao, member of the Planning Commission, is if anything more optimistic about the future: "The coming year promises to be a good one. If you study the cyclical pattern of the weather, the monsoons this year should be good. If this turns out to be true, everything will look up. Increasingly, even businessmen are beginning to realise that the coming monsoon will be crucial to economic performance. We all pray the rains are good," says K.N. Modi.

It is on the foreign exchange front that many economy-watchers see signs of [illegible]

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Close to half the IMF loan of about 00 crore has been drawn but the fo- change situation borders on the pre- Chelliah is frankly worried: "We become a little complacent because of loan, and may be in difficulty when runs out. Only oil production (up 30 provides the silver lining. But we made exports more competitive. I how if the structural adjustments that need to be made to the economy are being made fast enough."

Cautious Note: Official economists argue, however, that the Government has already started trimming its sails. Said one: "The trade deficit is high, but it has been coming down. And we have become more cautious about taking on new foreign debt. Also, the import of big budget items like steel and fertiliser have been reduced if not stopped." Among numerous decision-makers in government, there is a subtle shift of policy emphasis, away from a rosy-eyed boosting of exports to a more cautious programme aimed at cutting imports.

Businessmen, meanwhile, urge a series of measures to revitalise the economy. Says Thapar: The Government must go in for a reflationary policy." Adds Vinay Bharat Ram: "The interest rates are much too high. When the inflation rate has been brought down, who can borrow at 20 per cent interest?" Modi even argues for a large budget deficit.

Through the welter of opinions on the current situation and the outlook for the future, one fact stands out painfully clear: the year of productivity has proved to be a tragic misnomer. With major problems confronting agriculture, industry and foreign trade, the uphill climb back to a growth path is more daunting than ever.

—T.N. NINAN

TE BANK

Crash landing

IT IS probably the biggest scandal of its kind in the world of finance. And involved in it, to a degree yet to be ertained, is the State Bank of India

The scene of the action was Kuwait, ere unofficial speculation in shares rished as a result of the petro-dollar m. The prices of new companies' res often sky-rocketed by 300 to 400 cent in the space of just hours, and ment was often made by post-dated ques. Many of the companies existed on paper, and were in any case tered outside Kuwait, where no new nces were being granted to non-ductive trading companies.

The bubble had to burst, and when it around August last year, no less than billion were involved. Numerous ba- had been accepting the cheques by counting them at interest rates as high 50 per cent, and bank managers were rtedly collecting kickbacks for giving discounts.

Staggering Loss: But with the crash, ch even sent shock-waves through Street, the banks were saddled with ques for vast amounts—many of them worth the paper they were written on. e banks had foreseen the coming h, and pulled out in time. Not, unfor- ately, the State Bank of India, which is lved to the tune of a staggering Rs 30 re.

Most of the cheques were not backed any collateral, and the SBI has now n forced to register these with the wait Clearing Company, formed by Kuwait Government to collect all the -dated cheques. Alarmed at the ibility of losing such gigantic sums, Bombay-based State Bank sent out an ection team to Bahrain in January to through the accounts and study how disaster occurred.

J.C. Soares, general manager in SBI's international division, says it is still too early to assess the loss involved. Many of the cheques registered by the SBI had only been sent for collection by the bank, so that the SBI would lose nothing if these cheques were dishonoured. The loss would materialise in only those cases where the bank had discounted the cheques, Soares clarified. "As yet there is nothing to prove or disprove the liability of the State Bank," he added.

Culpable Attitude: Soares further insisted that even in the case of the discounted cheques, there might not be an outright loss, since the parties involved were big businessmen who would be in a position to make good.

Some banks had foreseen the coming crash, and pulled out in time. Not, unfortunately, the SBI, which is involved to the tune of a staggering Rs 30 crore.

Nevertheless, the bank is not in a position to sue those who issued the cheques, because the Kuwait Government has halted any criminal action. And the bank is clearly culpable since it had flouted a warning issued nine months ago by the Bahraini Monetary Agency not to indulge in the speculation.

Sources in Bahrain estimate that at best the bank may get back half the sum of Rs 30 crore. And though bank officials insist that "there is no reason to take an alarmist view", there is little doubt that the bank's Bahrain branch, which normally earns a Rs 10 crore profit, will in 1982 have caused the bank a substantial loss.

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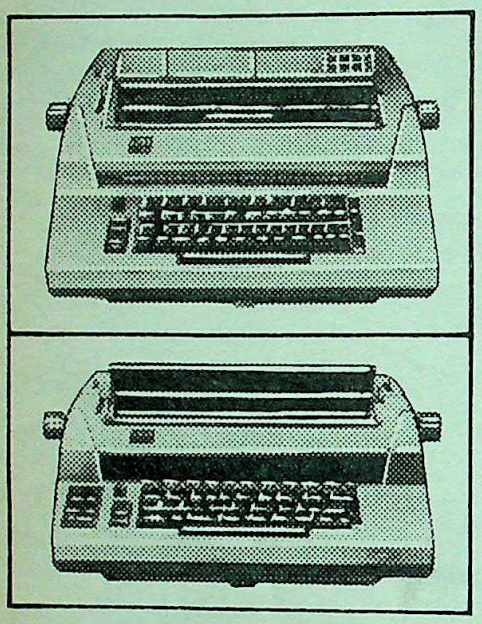

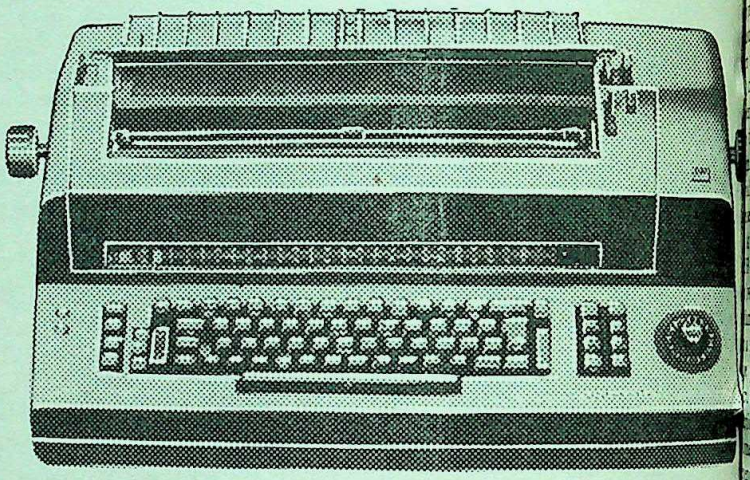

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ngle In The Yarn

E POLYESTER yarn tangle refuses o unravel. Two months after it burst nto the open, the battle between c yarn manufacturers and consu- ppears to have entered round two. he budget on hand, reports in the y yarn and textile industry daily *Trend*, indicated that the debate be- he advocates of free imports and the tionist lobby has gained momentum. d a leading yarn texturiser who was refront of the campaign against fur- tection being given to the domestic y: "We will renew our press cam- n educate the nation on how we are aken for a ride by domestic polyester rs and the Government, which has them so much protection against competition that they are unscru- profiteering at the consumers' e."

stake in the polyester battle is a crore trade in polyester filament ny) and partially oriented polyes- ment yarn (POY), which are used ingle-step texturising process to polyester and polyester-cotton Pitted against each other in the ion versus free imports debate are estic yarn spinners and over 450 ndent texturisers who process the efore supplying it to the textile y. Although the independent tex- s, who are held together by the All Crimpers Association (AICA), pro- y 15 per cent of the total yarn used ountry, they are particularly sensi- price and customs duty changes, since cannot pass on all price increases to stomers, the large-scale textile mills.

reased Imports: Because of a gro- emand for PFY and POY, and limited e production in the past, imports of e industry raw material have steadi- n in the last few years. By last year, 0,000 tonnes of POY and PFY valued at y Rs 260 crore were being imported , while domestic production was 000 tonnes. But domestic manufac- of the yarns, led by the state-owned , were protected from substantially r foreign competition by an import of 210 per cent, which brought the of the imported product in line with own.

ate last year, however, domestic ma- ers made a series of representations Government for a massive increase in ective import duty on the grounds nt international yarn spinners were dumping their produce in the country at unrealistically low prices. Arguing that the recession-hit international industry was taking advantage of India's open-door policy—POY and PFY have been on the open general licence list of imports since 1978—to dump their products, the Association of Synthetic Fibre Industry bombarded the Government with data to prove that foreign spinners were selling their yarn at prices well below the actual cost of production in order to keep their plants operational.

Explained P.N. Maitra, secretary-general of the association: "By July 1982 giant yarn manufacturers had slashed their prices by at least 50 per cent." Association President M.K. Modi said imports were

A filament yarn plant: protectionist attitudes

priced at almost the cost of the raw material, so that the plants abroad would not close down. "This reduction made the duty protection almost meaningless, since we could not hope to compete with their rock-bottom pricing," said Modi.

Contested Claims: Detailed price workings were shown to the Government to support their contention that a sharp hike in duty was needed to protect India's industry from being wiped out. "A number of our manufacturers were already contemplating production cutbacks, and in November Nirlon actually slashed production by over 60 per cent," said Maitra. Demanding that the existing import tariff of 210 per cent be further hiked by a flat Rs 30 per kilogram of imported yarn—which would effectively raise duties from 210 to 410 per cent at current import prices—the manufacturers' association paraded a host of statistics and costing details to support their contention.

In November, even as the Government was considering the spinners' demand, the texturisers launched a strident campaign against the proposed hike. Taking their grievance to the public with a series of imposing advertisements challenging the duty increase, the AICA issued advertisements in Delhi and Bombay dailies with the banner headline: "Should the country's texturising industry be allowed to die?" The manufacturers' claims were systematically contested and each of the series of three advertisements ended with a plea in bold type: "Please don't dump us."

Insisting that there was no foreign dumping of POY and PFY, the AICA which represents the decentralised, small-scale, yarn processing industry, concentrated largely in Bombay—charged domestic yarn manufacturers with seeking increasingly high levels of protection only to cover up their inherent inefficiencies and lack of competitiveness. Among the charges made in the detailed advertisements were:

- that domestic yarn spinners were more than adequately protected, as evidenced from their massive and growing profits every year: A *Business Standard* research bureau study cited states that annual growth in profits after tax in the industry is 41 per cent compared to a negative growth of 24 per cent in the cotton textile industry;
- that spinners were interested only in profiteering at the expense of the consumer, and so wanted to drive out texturisers and consolidate their monopoly;
- that if not for liberal import, the texturising industry would be completely wiped out due to the unrealistically high prices charged by indigenous yarn producers; and
- that because of the "inefficiency and technical incompetence of the spinning units", they were interested in perpetuating the "economy of shortages...with the ulterior motive of profiteering".

To support their claims, the AICA reeled out a mass of statistical data on the exorbitant duty level prevailing in the country—if both customs and countervailing excise duties are considered, the total worked out to over 600 per cent last year and the inordinate advantage to domestic producers due to excessive protection. Arguing that the price disadvantage for Indian producers of PFY and POY, even given the higher cost of raw materials and smaller scale of production compared to foreign manufacturers was not more than 90 per cent, the crimpers made a strong case for reduction in the protective duty rate by 100 per cent. "Nobody, not even the domestic spinners will deny that the demand for POY and PFY is growing so fast that there is short supply of the yarns in India," said Jamnadas H. Moorjani, a lea-

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ding texturiser and past chairman of the AICA, "and these manufacturers have not been making profits, which is their birthright, but downright profiteering by their unscrupulous price hike each time the import duty is raised."

BUT AT end-November, despite repeated representations to the Government and the publicity campaign, the crimpers lost the battle when a flat Rs 15 per kg duty was levied, raising the effective rate of duty at current prices from 210 per cent to roughly 315 per cent. The defeat was greeted with yet another advertisement, this time headed: "The Government has finally turned a deaf ear to our cry of anguish." "It is indeed highly deplorable," read the advertisement, "that instead of undertaking an exhaustive study to scrutinise the data submitted by our association, the authorities have thought it prudent to give credence to the misleading, distorted and untruthful submissions of the indigenous POY/PFY."

Moorjani reckons that cost calculations and comparisons with foreign spinners submitted by polyester yarn manufacturers to the Government are based largely on false data. While foreign manufacturing costs are taken from the largest and most efficient mills abroad, he states that the cost of production under Indian conditions is taken from the smallest and most inefficient unit, Nirlon.

He charges that while manufacturers have told the Government that cost of conversion of the raw materials into yarn is Rs 25 per kg in India, the same mills in their expansion plans to the Government and financial institutions show a conversion cost in the region of Rs 10 per kg. Similarly, the decline in foreign yarn prices is grossly exaggerated if considered only in dollar terms, as the Association of Synthetic Fibre Industry (ASFI) has done in their representations, but actually it is only a marginal decrease in rupee terms, since the rupee has weakened considerably against the dollar in the same period.

Government Decision: Polyester texturisers charge that the brain behind the campaign for increased protection is Dhirubhai Ambani, chairman of Reliance Textile which recently set up India's largest polyester yarn manufacturing complex. Insisting that he was the most vociferous champion of free imports till his own plant came into production last August, they state that the moment he switched from the role of importer to domestic manufacturer, he began lobbying for increased protection. S Moorjani: "There is no other manufactu capable of the kind of lobbying Dhiru has done. Six secretaries in the Uni Government studied the question of incr sing the duty and unanimously decided no hike should take place, but the mini overruled them all, and hiked the tariff

But Ambani refused to be drawn the controversy, stating that only Government decides these matters on change reserves and other considerati not individual lobbying.

The texturisers, meanwhile, are fi sing plans for their budget-eve campa which aims at preventing further hike customs duties or the canalisation of imports. Although the domestic produc of yarn will remain far short of demand spite the large new plants set up by Rel and Orkay, texturisers fear that the pow ful combine of Reliance, J.K. Synthetics Modipon in the yarn production busi will spell doom for their decentralised ind try. And with strong rumours of the entr Raunaq Singh, another industrialist kn for his close relations with the ruling p the small-scale processing industry will h its work cut out if it is to defend liberal imports. —CHANDER UDAY S

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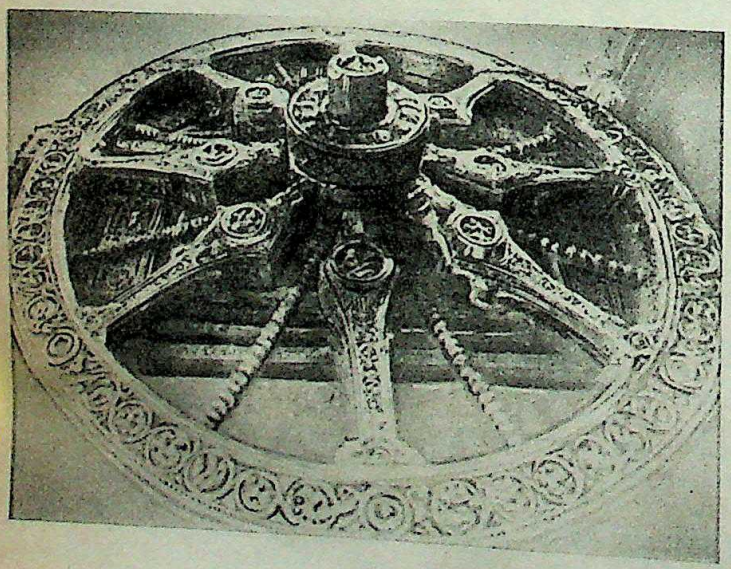

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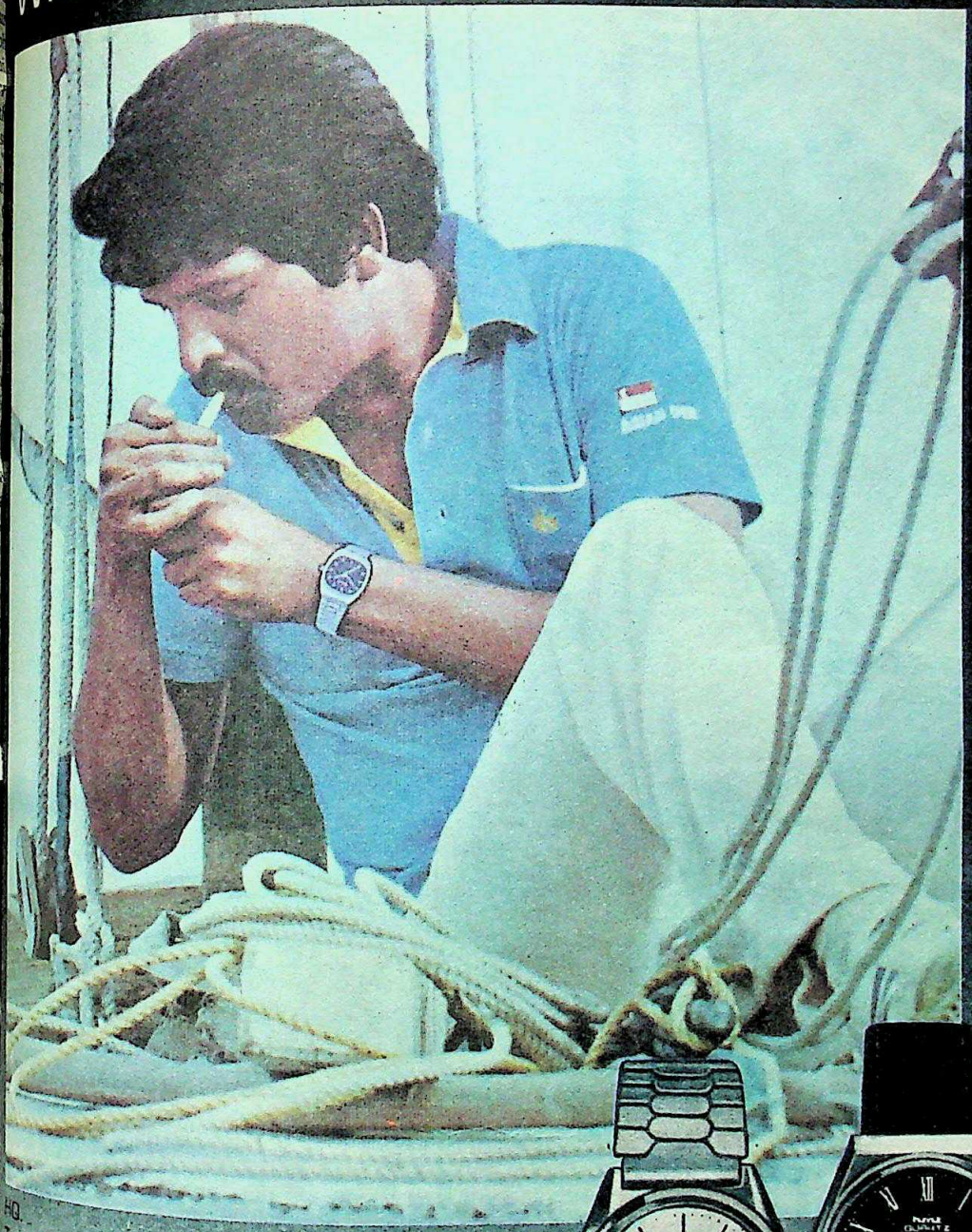

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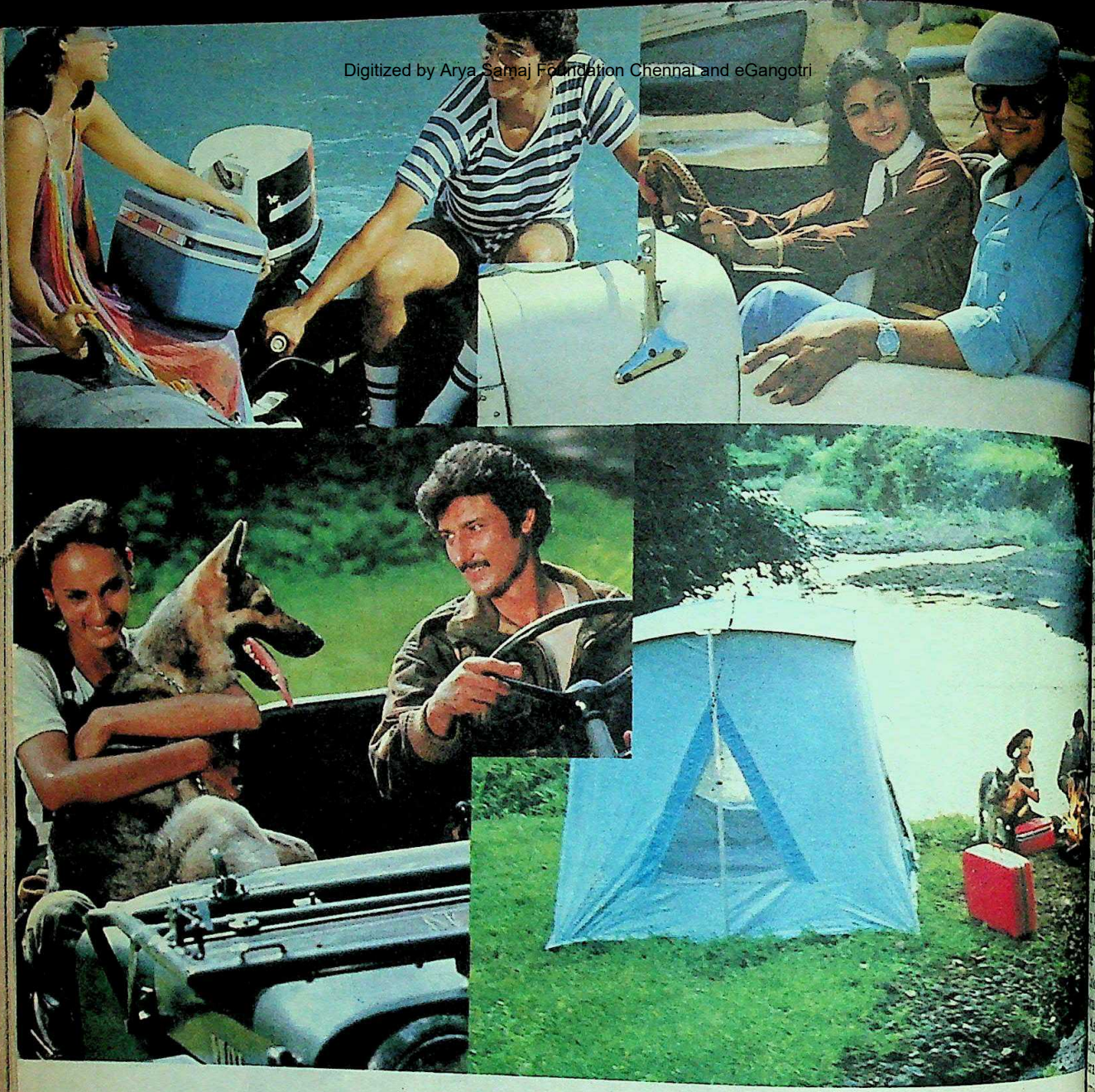

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ATE TAX

ero Tax Growth

THE PRE-BUDGET season has come around again, and industry has raised its familiar chorus: India is the highest taxed nation in the and the tax on corporate profits be reduced from 57 to 40 per cent. companies, plead the chambers of merce, are groaning under the present den and need urgent succour.

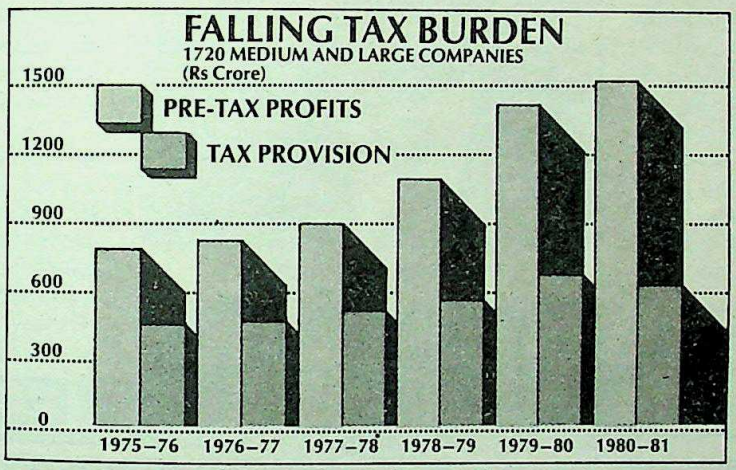
he facts, however, are dramatically . A steadily lengthening list of com- has paid no taxes at all for years toge- Among these are the most profitable fastest growing enterprises in the coun- of the 10 biggest private sector com- paid no tax on their pro- year, and a seventh had marginal tax liability. Of ntry's top 100 compa- many as 38 showed tax liability or a mini- that counted for no than a flea-bite.

s Planning: The Tata ning and Locomotive ny (TELCO) has not paid on its profits since Reliance Textile Indu- another corporate high- s provided for a tax lia- of no more than Rs 25 the last decade. Others the top 10 who reached a status in 1981–82 are lcutta Electric Supply ation, Associated Ce- Ashok Leyland and J.K. ks. Others lower down archy are Southern Pe- icals, Indian Explosi- eat Eastern Shipping, Rubber, Nirlon Synthe- Bombay Dyeing.

ch much lower down the ladder, a string of smaller companies which e same achievement to their credit. pur-based Lohia Machines, manu- s of textile equipment, have not paid s at all since starting operations way 1972.

this is perfectly legal. The secret lies gent tax planning: making use of the tives which the Government provi- our industrial growth. The incentives es number more than a dozen: 25 t of new investment in plant and ma- s exempt from tax, apart from which s enjoy a partial tax holiday for a number of years. Units set up in backward areas enjoy a further 20 per cent tax benefit, while 50 per cent extra depreciation is tax-deductible in any unit's first year of operations. There are yet other deductions for investment in research and development, in export market development and various other fields.

Strategies: L.M. Thapar, head of the Thapar group of industries, points out that 55 per cent of new investment can be claimed as tax deductible in an opening year on two counts alone: depreciation and the investment allowance. And if the investment has been based on indigenously developed technology, the figure goes up to 65 per cent.



A steadily lengthening list of companies has paid no taxes at all for years together. Among these are the most profitable and fastest growing enterprises in the country.

Most of these incentives have been available for decades: a variation of the investment allowance has been in existence since 1955. But it is only recently that the companies have woken up to the tremendous potential offered by the Government's tax provisions. Figures compiled by the Reserve Bank show that the effective tax rate of 1,720 medium and large companies dropped precipitously from 59 per cent in 1975–76 to 43 per cent in 1980–81, most of this almost certainly accounted for by the progressively more efficient use of tax incentives. The effective tax rate could drop still further if the Government now gives in to demands from companies to make the incentives even more liberal. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, for instance, has been asking for the investment allowance to be raised from 25 to 40 per cent.

Anand P. Gupta of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) at Ahmedabad profiles how two corporate giants—TELCO and Reliance—have performed the fiscal version of the Indian rope-trick. TELCO, he says, earned a pre-tax profit of Rs 66.19 crore in the five years to 1979–80, but was able to claim deductions of Rs 64.61 crore, of which depreciation and the investment allowance were the two most important. In 1981–82, says Gupta, TELCO had to pay no tax on profits of Rs 120 crore.

Impressive Record: Reliance has if anything done even better. In the four-and-a-half years to December 1979, the company paid Rs 0.25 crore as tax on profits of Rs 18.53 crore. And the company has paid no tax in the three years since then either. Meanwhile, Reliance has grown from being a Rs 64 crore company to sales of over Rs 400 crore last year. As of now, the company has ploughed back Rs 127 crore—much of its money saved from the taxman.

Rajya Sabha member R.R. Morarka recently presented the Government with a list of over 100 companies who paid no taxes on their profits, and demanded an explanation. The finance minister's weak reply was that the Central Board of Direct Taxes had been asked to look into the matter. Charges Morarka: "It is the big companies which have been able to make the maximum use of tax money to invest in their projects. This only leads to greater concentration of economic power in the hands of these companies."

Tax incentives have become so important that many industrialists now place effective tax planning at the centre of their corporate strategies. Dhirubhai Ambani, chairman of Reliance Textiles, admits frankly that tax planning is one of the most important parts of running a business in India, and boasts of the number of years in which he has not paid tax despite earning handsome profits. Rajan Nanda of Escorts says: "We went in for a floating dry dock because it could be acquired quickly and the tax benefit claimed.

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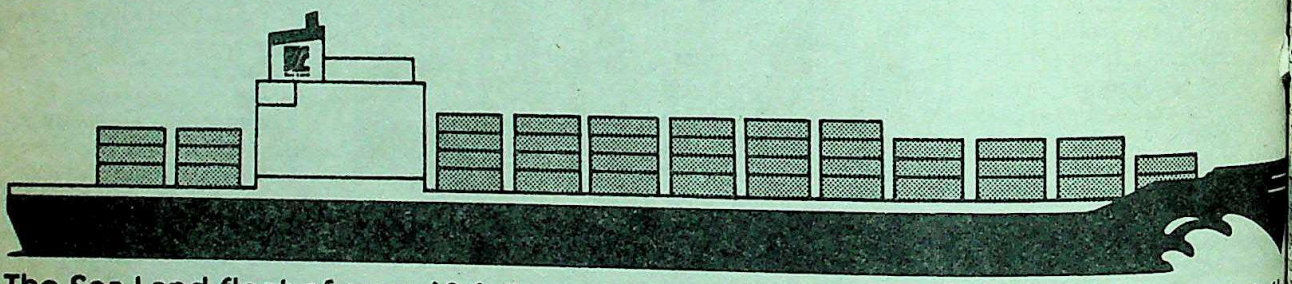

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native of setting up an industrial
ld have taken time, and the financial
ld have closed without us being able
the tax write-off."

Race: Large numbers of com-
have gone in for cement units almost
ecause the Government was handing
ons in this field and investment could
quickly to claim the tax benefit on
estment. The Birla units, for instan-
been in the forefront of the cement
with Kesoram Industries, Indian
Gwalior Rayon, Orient Paper and
all opting for what was for all of
entirely new area of activity. The tax
was sufficient attraction in an
(till recently) unprofitable indu-

Modis have been even more suc-
than the Birlas in their use of tax in-
Virtually every Modi company now
on a zero-tax basis, and the group
ched out in all directions with new in-
in order to claim tax write-offs.
N. Modi, chairman of the group:
our growth around the tax incenti-
are important for us."
this is not true of all industrial hou-
companies. TELCO, despite its zero-
since 1975–76, has certainly not
its growth strategy around tax in-
—a strategy that company Chair-
Moolgaokar decries. Moolgaokar
pay fairly heavy taxes for years to-
Rs 16.86 crore in the six years to
—rather than expand by straying
his company's chosen area of busi-
tax planning became effective only
company was able to expand its
production capacity. A parallel exam-
in Bajaj Auto, where Chairman
Bajaj chose to pay taxes and wait for a
to expand his two-wheeler business
than start new lines of production.

T THIS is clearly a question of busi-
ess philosophy, and there is little
doubt that those who did not place
ning at the centre of the scheme of
have paid more corporate taxes than
The Delhi Cloth and General Mills
for instance, has been a noticeable
in the area of tax planning, and
Managing Director Vinay Bharat
plains it as a deliberate act of choice.
ould have gone in for a cement unit
es two years ago, and claimed a large
nefit. But we wanted to enter more
logy-intensive areas, like the automo-
stry—for which we had to wait. Our
ter division has required tremendous
erial input, but the tax benefits we can
on this are very little." Nevertheless,
jor expansions now under way,
Bharat Ram says his company's tax liability has come down to 12 per cent of profits.

H. Langer, managing director of Siemens, defines the issue more clearly: "The question really is in what area should you diversify. Should you go into areas you do not know? We diversify only in electricals, which is the only thing we know. And we use tax incentives naturally."

Whatever the different corporate strategies, there seems little doubt that

Ambani: tailoring growth

Moolgaokar: natural expansion

purposeful managements are able to deploy money that would otherwise go as tax revenue for investment in fresh corporate assets. But surprisingly enough, even the most audacious tax planners are quite lukewarm about the generous official hand-outs. There seems to be a constant awareness of the risks involved in a hell-for-leather growth race aimed at beating the taxman. "You're living on your nerves all the time," says K.N. Modi. "Any company that is expanding has to borrow at heavy interest rates. And if the company suddenly runs into a bad year with no profits, you are left with the interest burden, an incomplete project and a serious cash flow problem. This kind of expansion is a sword that cuts both ways."

Rapid Growth: Modi is seconded by Vinay Jain of Lohia Machines, who describes rapid growth timed with tax set-offs as a fine balancing act. "The pace you have to keep shortens the life of company executives." Jain identifies three basic criteria for success in a tax-oriented growth strategy: continued profits must be assured, good projects must be identified constantly, and the projects have to be completed in the quickest possible time in order to claim the incentives. "It is a risky business," he adds.

Lohia Machines did in fact falter on one of its projects: a diversification into leather. The company eventually had to pull out of leather, but has been able to make a success of all its other projects, moving from draw texturising machines to a synthetic yarn processing unit and now still further into nylon-6 chips and two-wheelers. The success has been conspicuous: turnover in the last four years has grown 777 per cent and reserves and surplus by 301 per cent. The bulk of the internal funds required for a total investment of Rs 6.7 crore has come from taxes saved.

But it is the attendant risks and the tension of racing against the taxman that forces many industrialists and executives to admit that they would rather have a lower tax rate on industry than a high tax rate coupled with incentives. Says Jain: "You can expand more leisurely, at your own speed. In today's situation, we get no time to adjust to a new scale of operations and familiarise with a new product. The next new project has to be launched immediately."

Unequal Benefits: Vinay Bharat Ram makes the further point that the incentives are made most use of by the larger companies. Those with smaller operations and lower profits get left behind. "A lower tax rate would help all companies equally, and you have to keep the weaker companies in mind while framing tax policy."

That strikes a responsive chord in Shantilal K. Somaiya, president-elect of the Indian Merchants Chamber in Bombay. "The tax incentives can be used only by companies which already have growth programmes in hand and the capacity to grab funds to put these programmes into operation. This tends to put the incentives beyond the reach of many companies. What we really need is a lowering of the corporate tax limit to 50 per cent or less."

Thapar also concedes that most of the companies that have exploited the tax in-

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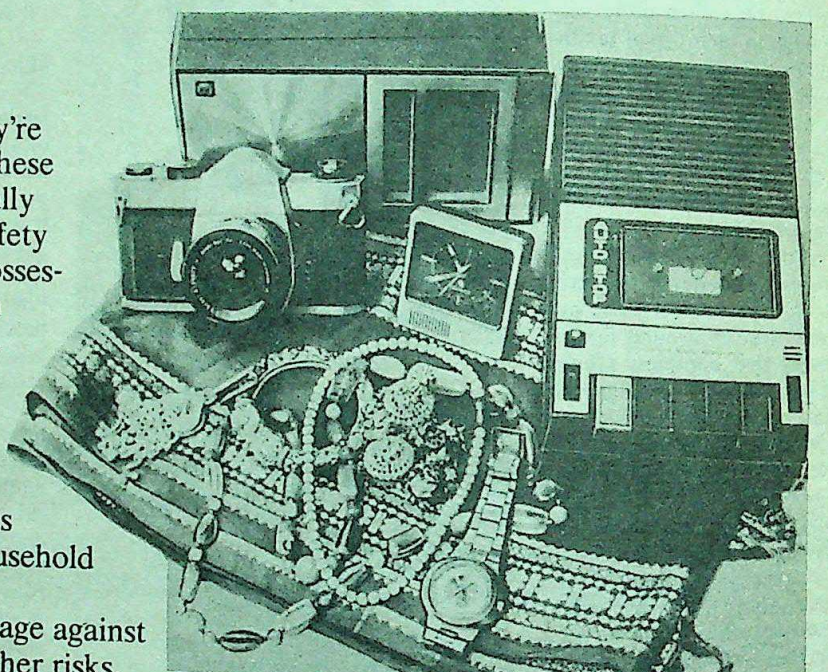

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to the maximum have been able to because of sheer size. And he too prefer a lower tax rate. But like other ustrialists he sees the incentives as necess- the same. "Many capital-intensive would simply not be viable if there no incentives. The incentives serve a purpose."

ficial Bonanza: But a counter-view- put forward in a book about to be ed by Vinay Lall of the National tre of Public Finance and Policy. Says "The purpose behind the incentives is not met in the way things work out. Industrialists tell me they would invest without the incentives, if the project profitable. And they treat the Govern- incentives as a bonanza that comes way."

mbani of Reliance Textiles adopts a ner line of argument: the Government losing corporate taxes, but gets more duties instead as companies grow and increase production. "The rnment should be concerned with the venue earned."

The incentives could cause headaches said one company director: "The tax look very attractive on paper. But it is often very difficult to actually get the money in your hands. This is often the case with state governments who promise long-term interest-free loans against sales tax dues. And in the case of the Central tax incentives, many companies have had to go to court before they could get the deduction."

Incentives: Industrialists also make the point repeatedly that the tax incentives are

"Industrialists would invest even without the incentives. They treat the Government's incentives as a bonanza."

really nothing more than a way of offsetting inadequate provisions for depreciation. Companies are allowed to claim depreciation only on the original value of their plant and equipment. But in a period of constantly rising prices, the sum set apart in this fashion is usually not enough to buy a new machine when the old one wears out. Said one industrialist: "Many of the incentives would not be necessary if depreciation could be charged on the replacement cost rather than the original cost of the machine."

Some specific tax incentives come in for pointed criticism. Eicher Goodearth, for instance, has been able to bring its effective tax rate to less than 10 per cent of profits by making substantial investments in research and development—on which 100 per cent depreciation can be claimed in the first year. But, says Finance Director N.R.N. Nalkur: "Investment in research and development is not eligible for the investment allowance. This makes it more attractive for companies to invest in productive assets rather than in research, and is certainly an anomalous situation."

But for all the headaches to companies and the shortfalls in the pattern of the tax incentives, the balance sheets of an increasing number of companies leave little room for doubt that tax planning has become a vital part of engineering corporate growth. For companies with the ability and the will to dare, India has become something close to a tax-free haven.

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Indian Oxygen Limited

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Chairman's Statement

RUSSI MODY

The following is the Statement made by Mr Russi Mody, Chairman, Indian Oxygen Limited, at the Forty-eighth Annual General Meeting of the Company held on 4 February 1983.

The Directors' Report and the Managing Director's Review of operations together with the Accounts for the year 1981/82 have been with you for some time and you must have read them. I shall only add a few observations on the performance of the year and the future as I see it.

I am sure you share my satisfaction at the Company achieving a steady improvement in its performance for three successive years. The good performance of the year has made it possible for your Directors to recommend the same rate of total dividend of 20 percent as last year on a larger share capital following the issue of bonus shares.

I have always stressed that production and productivity are the index of corporate health. The corporate strategy for the year placed particular emphasis on increased production and I am glad that production and volumetric sales of almost all the products of the Company have registered an increase. This achievement has to be viewed in the background of the chronic shortage of power from which several units of the Company have been suffering in varying degrees. Added to this there has been a demand recession involving certain sectors of the industry which use our products. At the national level also the increase in industrial production during the year has been much lower than what was achieved in the previous year. The pursuit of higher production and increased productivity is a continuous process and difficulties notwithstanding, this pursuit will continue in your Company.

Some welcome policy liberalisations have been announced by the Government during the year for industrial growth. MRTP Act has also been amended redefining dominance and facilitating modernisation amongst other things. This shows that the Government is now a little less apprehensive about large houses, the largest one in our country being very small indeed by world standards. I am confident that these are forerunners of further policy relaxations not restricted to any particular sector of the industry or any particular aspect of policy but aimed at developing a whole new attitude in those who are engaged in economic activities to make a greater and more meaningful contribution to the national effort of creating more wealth, generating more employment and reducing poverty. Under the new policy IOL has submitted a few proposals to the Government which when implemented will open up a new vista for your Company.

As I mentioned earlier power has been a major constraining factor in your Company achieving targeted production. And one wonders why there should be such a chronic shortage of power in a country which can successfully plan, organise and manage something like the Asiad. All that can be said about the Asiad has already been said but I cannot help referring to this significant event which has demonstrated beyond all doubt our capability to do things on a contemporary international standard and scale. There has

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been some complaint in certain quarters about the extravagance but in my view this was worthwhile provided we learn the lessons of the Asiad and deploy our management capabilities to action building efforts. We should take up the task of building our infrastructure — the power plants, the railways, the air lines, the communication systems-on a sound footing with the same degree of determination, dedication and efficiency as we have demonstrated in the Asiad. I am confident that if we can set right the infrastructure, economic activities will be stimulated and the much needed generation of wealth and employment will take place. I am also confident that our public sector managers will achieve this objective given the support they deserve from the top.

After having established the Company's on-going business on a sound footing your Directors are addressing themselves to growth for the future. In the context of changing Government policy conducive to industrial growth, the management capabilities demonstrated by the country, the rich resources your Company has in its men, the technological development to be achieved through R&D activities at the new Centre to which the Managing Director has made a reference in his Review, and the support of the worldwide organisation of The BOC Group, I see good prospects for such growth.

Fissiparous and separatist tendencies are once again plaguing the national scene. At a time when all our efforts should be directed towards economic regeneration and helping the masses of our people to attain a higher standard of living, it is a pity that most of our energies seem to be heading in a direction which may well prove injurious to the integrity of our country. Whether it is a defect in our character or whether it is a failure on our part to work the style of democracy that we have adopted, it is difficult to say, but it is certain that in the last thirty years, we have failed to consolidate the many successes we have achieved in other fields because of our failure to understand the true nature of a working democracy, and our over absorption in the game of politics.

The achievement of your Company during the year has been the achievement of the men in it at all levels. The management staff performed their duties with a high sense of responsibility and commitment and the workers directed their efforts to increase production and maintain the high standard of quality of your Company's products and services. The workers' unions have demonstrated a mature approach to industrial relations. I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate all of them.

Calcutta
4 February 1983

Note : *This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the meeting.*

HIGHLIGHTS OF PERFORMANCE

	Year ended 30 September 1982	Year ended 30 September 1981
	Rs lakhs	Rs lakhs
Sales	9149	7794
Profit before taxation	1230	960
Provision for taxation	695	625
Profit after taxation	535	335
Dividend distribution	219	164
Earnings per share	Rs 4.89	Rs 4.08
Dividend per share	Rs 2.00	Rs 2.00

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LIQUOR

High Stakes

THEY have found devilishly ingenious ways of beating the publicity ban. Faced with a total bar on the advertising and sales promotion of intoxicants by the Maharashtra Prohibition Act, 1949—most states, excluding stray exceptions like Jammu & Kashmir, have similar laws—Bombay-based liquor manufacturers and distributors have in the past year worked out increasingly wily methods of overcoming the statute.

The ploy was first worked out by the Ahuja Brothers, a liquor marketing firm which launched its own brand, "Black Stallion" early last year. Sections 23 (A) and 24 (1) of the Prohibition Act unambiguously ban advertisements and promotion which "solicit the use of or offer an intoxicant", making it impossible for companies to directly advertise the product without inviting government action. But B.K. Ahuja, senior partner in the concern and the brain behind the new whisky, came up with a devious method of circumventing the law. Two months before the whisky was launched, a loose tea blended and marketed by the Ahuja family was renamed "JSS Black Stallion", and the logo of a galloping stallion was added to the simple brown packet. A massive advertising campaign touting "Black Stallion from the house of Ahujas" ostensibly to promote the tea, was plastered on hoardings and buses in Bombay, and hot on its heels the whisky of the same name was launched.

But it was only a thinly disguised ploy for getting around prohibition laws. In fact, Ahuja Tea, which has been marketed since 1928 under that brand, continues to be called by that name and even the new packet has "Ahuja Tea" printed on its front, while "Black Stallion" is written in small letters on the sides. At Ahuja's north Bombay office-warehouse too, "Ahuja Tea" and "Black Stallion Whisky" are emblazoned on sign-boards and shutters, while there is no mention of "Black Stallion Tea". Admitted Ahuja with a self-satisfied smirk: "Directly you cannot advertise whisky and liquor, so my brother S.K. Ahuja who handles our tea division, decided to launch Black Stallion tea using the same logo. But nobody can say that I am advertising my whisky, because even the publicity bills are paid by Ahuja Tea and not the liquor division."

Publicity Expenditure: Ahuja's scheme has had spectacular results. Although "Black Stallion", priced at over Rs 70 a bottle, competes with brands marketed by well-established liquor giants like Mohan Meakin, Shaw Wallace and the MacDowell Group, in the year since it was launched, the whisky has grabbed an estimated 10 per cent of the Bombay market for "prestige liquor."

The "Black Stallion" success has led to vigorous new advertising efforts by rival manufacturers. On December 31, Shaw Wallace launched its new premium whisky "Royal Challenge" after a brazen two-month advertising campaign which promised drinkers a "blend of the finest in India and Scotland". The MacDowell Group suddenly intensified a campaign which ostensibly promotes their bottled soda though it probably does wonders for their "MacDowell" range of whiskies. Chawla Sons, a small Bombay liquor-trading outfit which introduced a new whisky called "Castle Rock" last month, advertised its product with a nude woman framed by the outline of a whisky carton and two glass tumblers. Said Brijmohan Dhingra, general manager of Chawla Sons: "Our subsidiary company Shangrila Traders advertises Castle Rock without mentioning it's whisky. People will see the two glasses and realise it is whisky, but otherwise the advertisement means nothing, so why should the prohibition department object? Anyway, if they ask us then we'll name some other product with Shangrila's Castle Rock and say that we're advertising that."

The provocative whisky ads: beating the ban

The Maharashtra Government's prohibition department, meanwhile, has been surprisingly unconcerned about the spate of liquor advertisements. Bewildered by the novel tricks employed by whisky manufacturers and distributors, prohibition officials in Bombay looked on as each new [illegible] publicity began. Amazingly even [illegible] ment media have been used; "Black S[illegible] has been advertised for over a year on [illegible] buses, and even today more than [illegible] billboards for the brand adorn bus[illegible] Bombay. Even more brazenly the brand [illegible] plugged for 13 weeks running last year [illegible] All India Radio, using prime Sunday [illegible] ing hours for a promotional talk [illegible] hosted by one-time film comedian J[illegible] Walker. MacDowell advertised their [illegible] with the line "make mine [illegible] Dowell's", continuing to air [illegible] Doordarshan.

The penalties, even if [illegible] dealers are proved to have infr[illegible] the law, are surprisingly light. Se[illegible] 73 of the Prohibition Act prescri[illegible] jail term of up to six months or [illegible] of Rs 500 for violators of the [illegible] tisement ban. Maharashtra Pro[illegible] tion Commissioner A.D. S[illegible] admits that nobody has been [illegible] prisoned for this violation in m[illegible] memory. Under another clause of the [illegible] liquor manufacturers can have their lic[illegible] suspended for infringement of the law, [illegible] this does not amount to much in prac[illegible]

Ignoring the Maharashtra Prohibi[illegible] Act in a bid to boost sales of the high-[illegible] brands, whisky manufacturers and d[illegible] butors were, last fortnight, mounting [illegible] creasingly aggressive campaigns to est[illegible] their brands. With an estimated sales p[illegible] tial of over Rs 6 crore in the western r[illegible] alone, the premium whiskies have bec[illegible] high-stakes business which make the [illegible] spect of government prosecution and p[illegible] ties pale into insignificance.

—CHANDER UDAY S[illegible]

THE MARKETS

Budget Blues

WILL he or will he not? That is [illegible] question. Will the finance mi[illegible] faced with a yawning deficit [illegible] placed at anything between Rs 2,500 c[illegible] and Rs 3,500 crore, tighten the screw fur[illegible] or will he say to himself that enough [illegible] enough and just sit back and watch unt[illegible] chickens come home to roost? The ma[illegible] men are apparently divided on the answe[illegible] they are bound to be, which explains the [illegible] saw in share prices during the last two we[illegible] The political earthquake in the south ha[illegible] now receded into the background and [illegible] is general agreement that the new stress[illegible] the political field are not unduly alar[illegible] On that score at least, the marketeers [illegible] put aside their worries.

The minor reshuffle of the [illegible] Cabinet is perhaps a pointer to the sh[illegible] things to come. The reshuffle caused [illegible]

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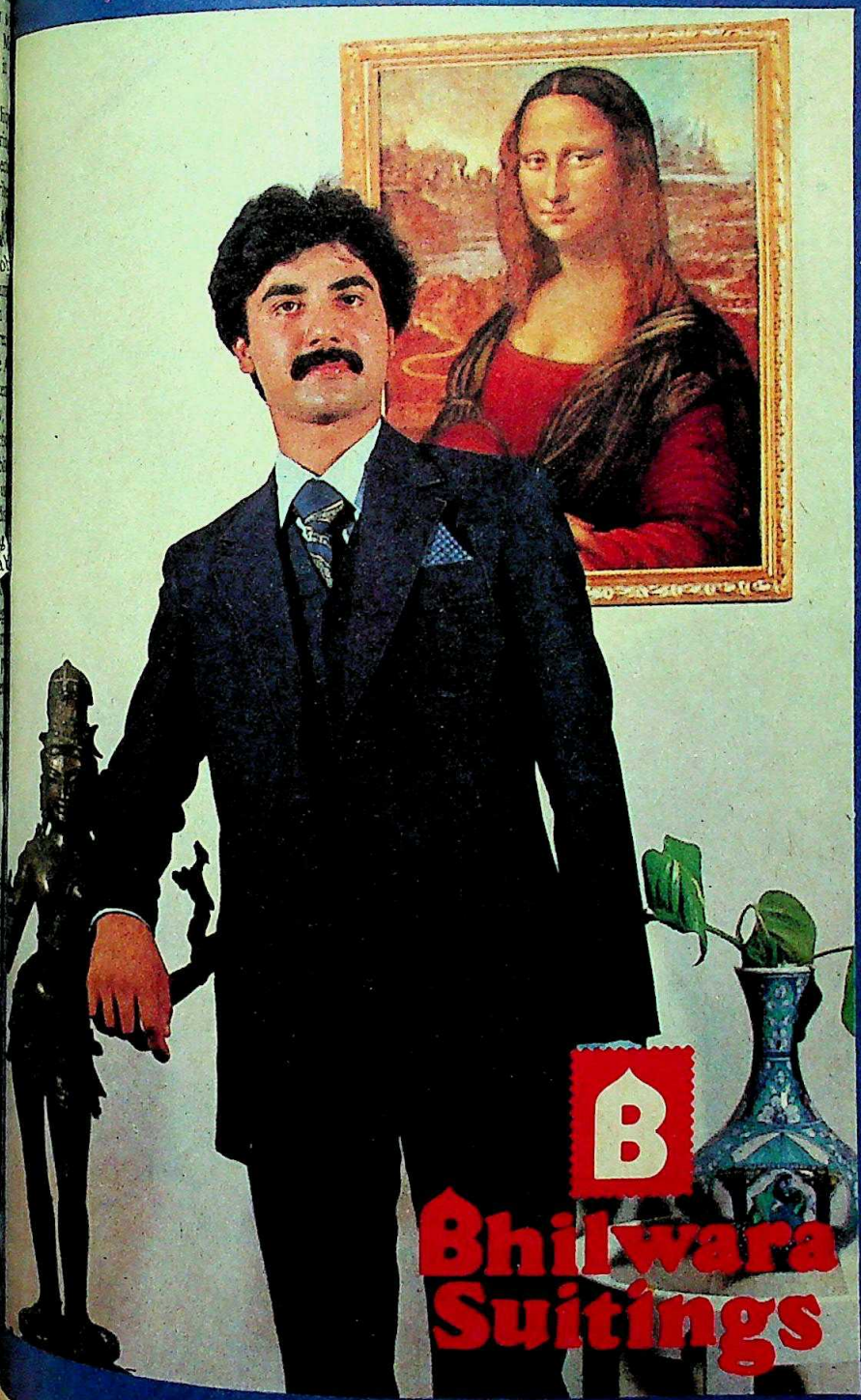

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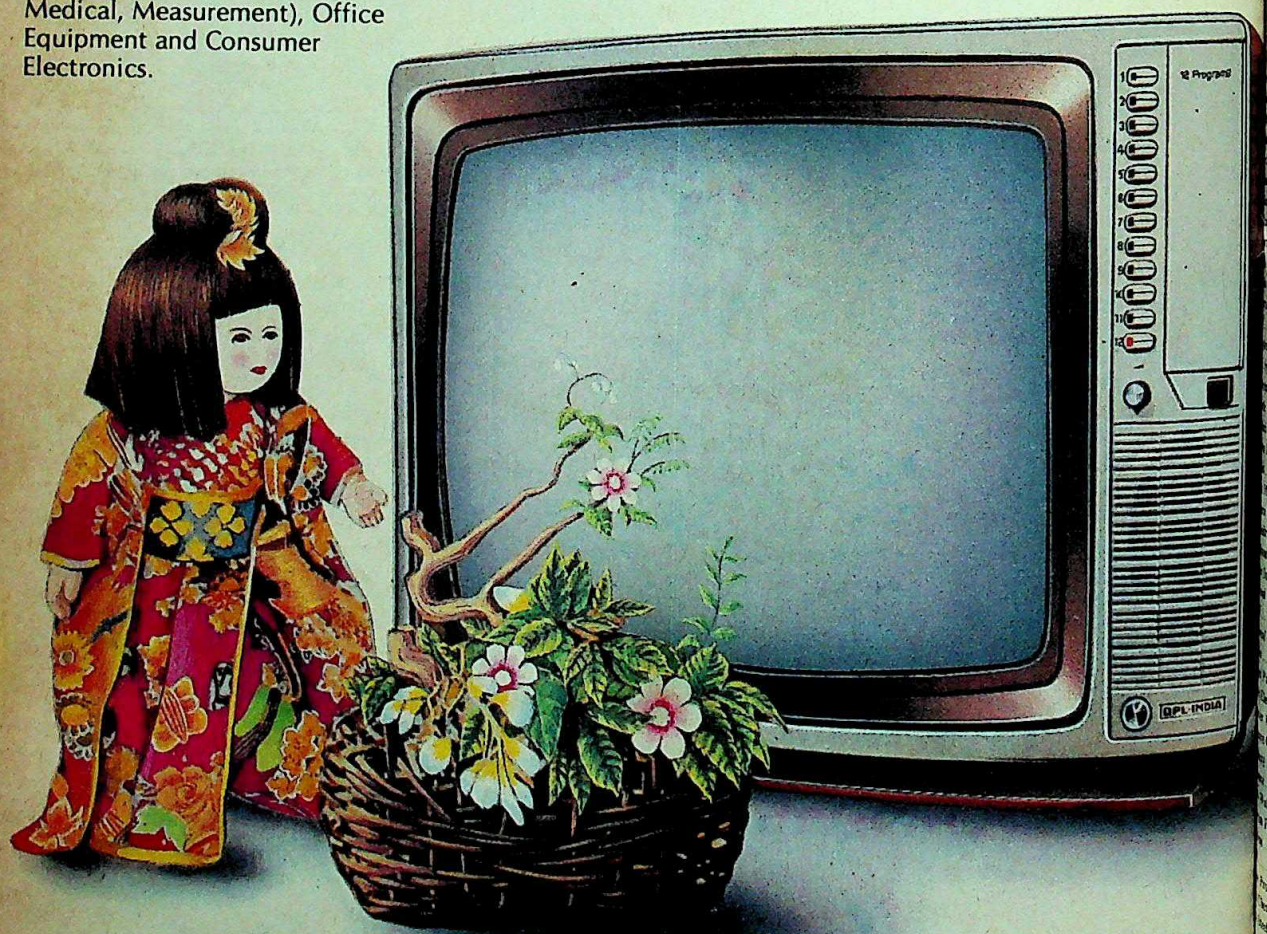

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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High	Low	Close	Change on Fortnight
	1983		3.2.83	
Ambalal Sarabhai	17.75	14.00	14.00	(0.50)
Calico Lyndland	36.50	33.50	34.75	(0.75)
Century	35.00	33.00	33.00	(2.00)
Gujarat Cement	406.00	372.00	375.00	(4.50)
Hindustan	29.75	28.25	28.25	(0.25)
Indian Rayon	1,200.00	1,025.00	1,050.00	10.00
Indian	42.80	40.00	40.00	(1.25)
Indian	257.00	233.00	233.00	(10.50)
Indian Rayon	54.60	47.60	47.60	(3.00)
Indian	74.00	69.00	70.00	0.50
Indian Steel	73.00	65.50	65.50	(3.00)
Indian Dyeing	28.00	27.20	27.90	0.40
Indian Bond	246.50	228.00	228.00	(10.00)
Indian Mills	202.50	195.00	195.00	(2.50)
Indian Dyes	762.50	695.00	738.50	18.50
Indian Spinning	57.50	53.20	54.50	(2.00)
Indian India	94.00	84.00	86.00	(4.50)
Indian	36.31	32.31	36.31	1.65
Indian Cloth Mills	21.50	20.20	20.35	(0.65)
Indian India	21.50	20.75	21.50	0.50
Indian Hotels	45.00	39.75	40.12	(1.44)
Indian	65.00	63.00	63.00	(1.00)
Indian Securities	31.50	23.50	24.00	(2.00)
Jessop Williams	21.75	20.30	20.40	(0.40)
Jyoti Fertilisers	490.00	449.00	449.00	(15.00)
Kalyan Rayon	52.00	45.00	47.25	0.25
Kalyan Aluminium	34.40	32.10	33.15	1.05
Hindustan Lever	56.00	54.00	54.00	(1.50)
Kirloskar Motors	35.10	28.70	29.30	(0.14)
Lakshmi Dyes	35.50	26.50	26.50	(4.00)
Madhusudan	20.00	18.60	18.60	(0.80)
Madras Cable	23.00	21.80	22.00	(0.90)
Madras Explosives	24.00	22.10	23.40	0.60
Mafatlal	56.00	53.00	54.00	1.00
Mahindra Organic	28.50	26.50	26.50	(1.00)
Mahindra Oxygen	33.60	31.30	31.60	0.30
Mahindra Sand	87.00	83.00	84.00	nil
Mahindra	44.85	39.30	39.30	(1.60)
Mahindra Ten	24.00	20.35	23.80	3.00
Mahindra Industries	57.50	48.40	48.40	(6.50)
Mahindra	65.40	57.70	57.70	(3.60)
Mahindra Engineering	163.00	151.00	155.00	4.00
Madras (Madras)	24.00	23.00	23.50	(0.50)
Mahindra & Toubro	56.00	53.00	54.50	(0.25)
Mahindra	16.00	14.20	15.85	1.05
Mahindra Machines	60.25	42.75	48.00	2.50
Mahindra Costs	22.60	19.50	22.60	1.85
Mahindra & Mahindra	56.00	47.00	49.00	nil
Mahindra	29.00	29.00	29.00	nil
Mahindra Industries	257.50	250.00	252.50	nil
Mahindra Iron	24.00	22.00	22.25	(0.75)
Mahindra Organic	26.00	21.75	22.50	nil
Mahindra	207.50	186.25	186.25	(6.00)
Mahindra Paper	39.25	37.75	39.00	0.50
Mahindra Pharmaceuticals	47.10	41.10	41.50	(1.00)
Mahindra Auto	29.25	28.80	28.85	(0.15)
Mahindra Cooker	376.00	327.00	327.00	(15.00)
Mahindra	29.00	27.50	28.00	nil
Mahindra	40.75	36.50	36.50	(3.00)
Mahindra Welfare	183.00	174.25	174.25	(1.75)
Mahindra Man-made Fibres	39.05	35.25	37.75	(0.35)
Mahindra	30.62	29.00	29.00	nil
Mahindra	43.00	42.25	42.50	(0.50)
Mahindra Products	17.50	15.25	16.40	nil
Mahindra Rubber Chemicals	46.80	42.65	42.65	(2.10)
Mahindra Steel	67.00	56.00	56.00	(6.00)
Mahindra Tyres	301.50	258.00	258.00	(15.00)
Mahindra Vehicles	455.00	416.00	417.00	(11.00)
Mahindra Vehicles Black	45.00	39.25	41.20	1.95
Mahindra Tractors	25.10	23.60	23.60	(1.30)
Mahindra Tractors	24.80	23.00	23.00	nil
Mahindra Tractors	283.00	262.00	264.00	2.00
Mahindra Tractors	25.00	22.40	23.20	0.60

tually no waves in Dalal Street and elsewhere and some shares have actually recovered from their previous levels. Century Spinning which has reported—much to everyone's relief—reasonably good results, is back in action, and so are Delhi Cloth Mills, East India Hotels, Gwalior Rayon and Hindustan Aluminium. Brooke Bond and Blow Plast are also holding their ground while nearly everyone around them have lost or are losing theirs.

Corporate news continues to be encouraging. Mahindra & Mahindra is expected to do well (its report is due this month) and so is Gujarat Fertilisers, once the bluest of blue chips on the Bombay market. Fertiliser companies are among those very few that have taken the least beating from the bears since the new year began. This is possibly because of rumours that the Government expects to raise fertiliser prices very soon. Cement, auto and steel shares were in the dumps until their prices were hiked, and it now seems to be the turn of fertilisers. Both Indian Explosives and Zuari Agro have perked up, albeit by a small margin, but if Gujarat Fertilisers comes back with a bang, the fertiliser shares might go through the roof.

Fluid Situation: There are many people who think that the non-residents might receive a few more goodies in the coming budget in the form of concessions for portfolio investments; but this is possibly wishful thinking on the part of the bulls who must be trying to find a way out of the present bear ring. The Government made much of its incentives to non-residents offered in the last budget, but evidence so far suggests that funds from that source have not been all that large, though quite a few companies which made special efforts to attract non-resident funds for their debenture issues seem to have done well.

But debentures are one thing and equities another—although they may be partially linked in the case of convertible debentures—and unless the Government really goes ahead with a wholesale bonfire of many of the controls on such funds, they will continue to be no more than the trickle they have been so far.

February is generally a thin month for the marketmen who are busy keeping their fingers crossed, rather than using them to signal their friends on the exchange floor. But there is always some interesting news to cause a flutter now and then. Ambalal Sarabhai and Calico are to merge again after a four-year period of forced separation. Escorts is to take over its sister concern Goetze on terms which seem to be fairly favourable to the latter's shareholders. How such mergers will affect the market in the long term is anybody's guess.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit	Currency	TT Selling Rates (Rs)	TT Buying Rates (Rs)
Australia	1	As $	9.7060	9.6019
Austria	100	As Sch	57.9931	57.3574
Bahrain	1	Dinar	26.3192	26.1224
Bangladesh	100	Taka	41.4509	41.1411
Canada	1	Can $	8.1635	8.0751
Egypt	1	Egp £	12.1215	12.0309
France	1	Fr Frc	1.4358	1.4204
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.5158	1.4999
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.4280	1.4173
Iran	100	Rial	11.7289	11.6413
Italy	100	Lt Lira	0.7042	0.6973
Japan	100	Jap Yen	4.1970	4.1526
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.7756	0.7656
Kuwait	1	Dinar	34.3010	34.0446
Malaysia	1	ML $	4.3926	4.3441
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.8990	0.8923
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7530	0.7474
Netherlands	1	D Glds	3.7003	3.6604
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.7781	0.7723
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.8066	4.7530
Spain	100	Sp Pt	7.6234	7.5531
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4709	0.4674
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.3345	1.3209
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	4.9316	4.8772
Tanzania	1	T Sh	1.0175	1.0099
Thailand	100	Baht	44.0000	44.0000
UK	1	Pound	15.2870	15.1481
USA	1	US $	10.0030	9.8925
UAE	1	Dihram	2.7179	2.6976
USSR	1	Rouble	13.7099	13.6025
W. Germany	1	DM	4.0670	4.0237

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on February 8, 1983.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index*		
February 3, 1983	252.4	2.4
Cereals	264.2	10.7
Chemicals	343.6	19.4
Industrial Fibres	171.4	2.4
Metals	344.7	(1.4)
Sugar	191.0	13.1
Textile Yarns	219.3	(2.0)
Vegetable Oils	300.0	(3.9)
Gold, standard, February 3, 1983 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,775.00	171.00
Silver, .999 February 3, 1983 (Rs per kg)	3,380.00	440.00
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index*		
February 1, 1983	235.3	(13.5)
Cement	231.1	(14.2)
Chemicals	207.8	(17.3)
Engineering	387.5	(20.9)
Fertilisers	207.1	(6.0)
Man-made Fibres	369.4	(38.7)
Paper	460.0	(30.4)
Rubber Goods	156.8	(18.6)
MONEY		per cent
Money Supply, December 31, 1982		3.3
Bank Deposits		4.1
Foreign Exchange Assets		9.2

* 1969–70 = 100

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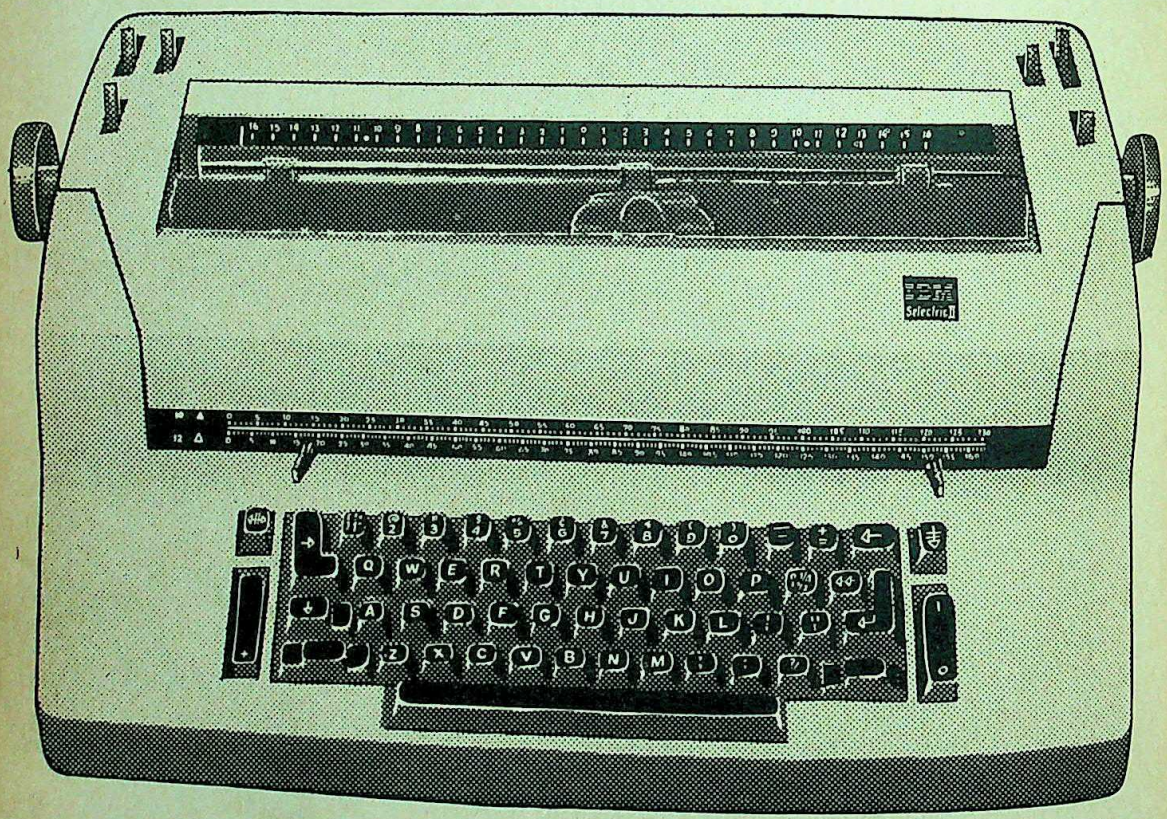

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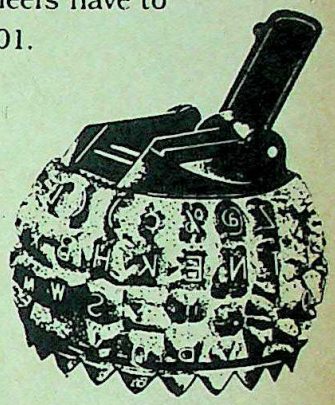

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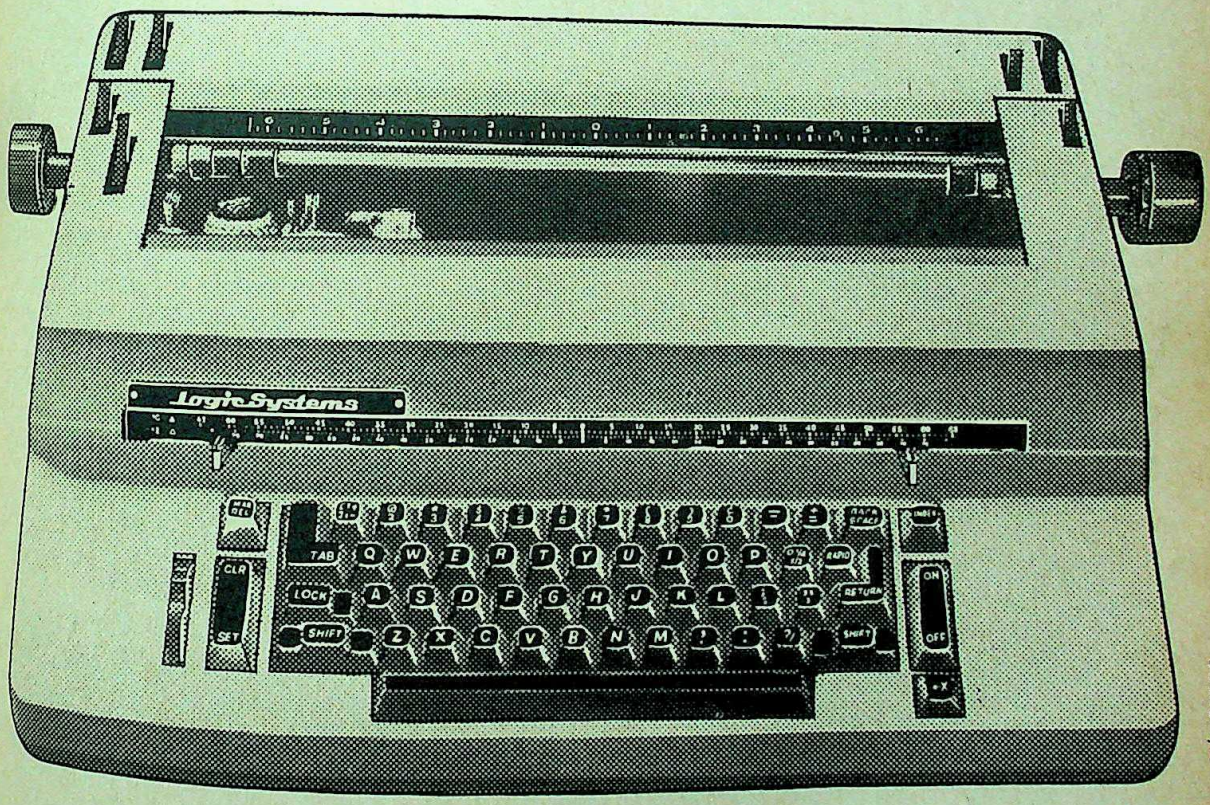

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HANDALAWALA

agnificent Obsession

RL Khandalawala is just like a ucature of the brilliant but bsent-minded professor. A rum-ss-fitting morning coat over a thick, ed woollen pullover ward off the l of mid-January Bombay; his feet ad in woolly socks under a pair of open sandals; and on his face, dominated by a pencil-thin Hercule ustache, he wears a bemused be-expression, a beaming smile break-ch time he gazes at the objects which ed the pivotal role in his life—a exquisite miniature paintings and representative of almost every le, period and province in ancient currently being exhibited at the Wales Museum in Bombay.

9, Khandalawala is a top-rung criminal lawyer with a string of als behind him. But his first love been ancient Indian art. "I always t is my profession and law just a e quipped. Bringing out his col-r its first-ever public showing late mber, the lawyer-historian put on remarkable variety of art objects, them dating to the 2nd century B.C. Magnificent Obsession", the exhi-the Anand Coomaraswamy Hall of Prince of Wales Museum was with visitors for over a month.

first private art collection ever hibited since the 1976 Antiqui-gistration Act, Khandalawala's "Obsession" is a painstakingly assembled selection of outstanding art objects. Valued, in current terms, at over Rs 40 lakh, it is a collection which art historians insist contains the cream of Indian art and sculpture. Explained Dr Sadashiv Gorakhshkar, director of the museum: "Dr Khandalawala's collection is unique because he is an authority on the art. A scholar who has made a detailed study of every period and province in Indian history, he has acquired objects which are characteristic of different ages and schools: the miniatures section is simply fantastic."

Detailed Study: An amazing amount of effort has gone into building up the Khandalawala collection. Thoroughly immersed in the study of art since 1921, when he was allowed access to the huge miniature painting collection of Burjog Treasurywala, a close relative, the budding art historian threw himself into the pursuit with a will. "That collection then became the nucleus for the National Museum's paintings section," he recalled, "but my interest in art grew rapidly and I have been constantly involved as an art historian since then."

For the next 16 years, during which period he earned the bar-at-law from the Middle Temple at London's Inns of Court, he kept up his study of Indian miniatures and sculptures, travelling extensively to examine works of art in museums and collections around the country. When he finally began to acquire paintings and sculptures in 1937, it was in furtherance of the same obsessive need to study and document India's art history. Selecting paintings and sculptures characteristic of the periods and regions he was writing about, he bought hand-picked objects which would help him in both understanding and writing about ancient art. Said Haridas Swali, a fellow-collector who visited Khandalawala's collection 21 times in the first month of showing: "It is clear from Karl Khandalawala's exhibition that this is not a rich man's collection. Money has definitely played a secondary role, because the primary factor has been his deep knowledge, insight and impeccable taste. Art becomes expensive mainly when it becomes fashionable, but anybody as knowledgeable as him would not be concerned with the prevailing fashions at all."

Khandalawala's entire collection was acquired in the years between 1937 and 1950, when he was appointed a member of the National Museum's Art Purchase Committee, and gave up collecting in order to avoid a conflict of interests. But in the 13 years of active purchase, the lawyer-historian had put together a selection of art that was magnificent in its diversity. Travelling extensively from Kandahar and the North-West Frontier to Nepal and Burma in the east, Khandalawala found time from his burgeoning legal practice to make a thorough study of the whole Indian subcontinent. He wrote frequently on the results and discoveries that came from his tours, visiting archaeological sites, museums and temples across the country to make a detailed study of Indian art history.

Extraordinary Perceptions: Much of Khandalawala's collection was acquired

Khandalawala with part of his collection: impeccable taste

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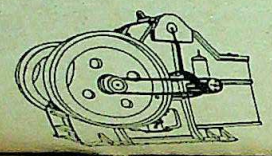

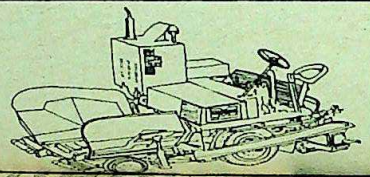

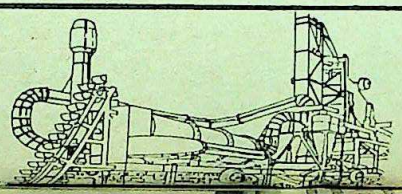

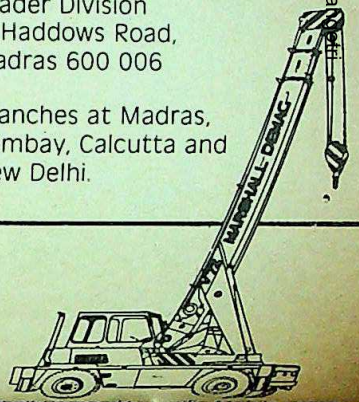

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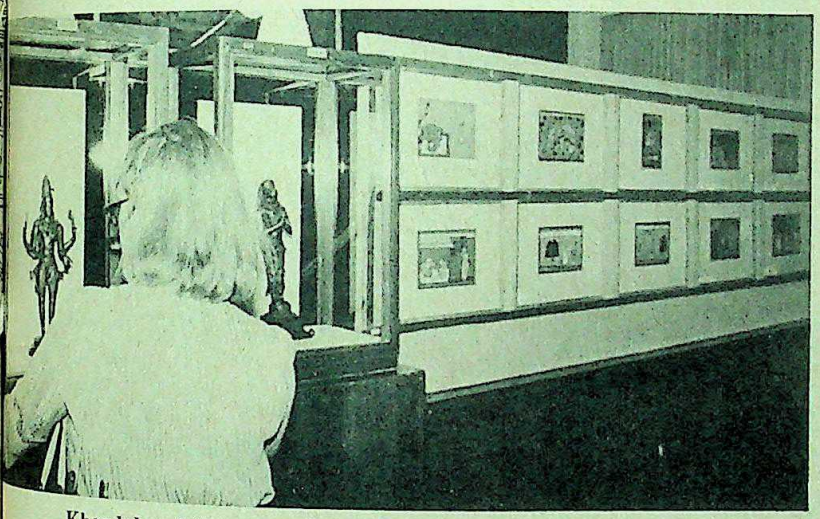
...use of the man's extraordinary ...ns and knowledge. A stone Naga ...human head crowned by a hooded ...exhibited is a case in point. ...through Bhilasa in Madhya ...as a tonga one day, Khandalawala ...the tip of a carved stone jutting out ...and at the foot of a tree. Recognising ...lock of hair unique to the Gupta ...ists of the 5th century, he promptly ...the tonga and started digging, ignor... ...tonga driver's warnings of the dire ...ences which would befall him if the ...re annoyed. "I washed the piece that ...ght and sure enough, found that it ...5th century Naga head as I had ...d," said Khandalawala to a rapt ...at the exhibition. "But three days ...fell off the Vishwanath temple at ...ho and smashed my shoulder, and I ...ched the same shoulder four times ...m. But now I think I have paid for it ...and this priceless piece has been ...d."

...agnificent Obsession" includes 116 ...s, 164 paintings and drawings, and ...and wood carvings, most of them ...historic masterpieces. Among the ...are characteristic Pratihara statues, ...vings which date back to the time of ...kings, Nepalese and south Indian ...stucco statuettes from Kandahar ...with the pronounced Graeco-...influences which followed ...er's invasion, and Gujarat wood ...which date from the 16th and 17th ...Particularly outstanding is a large ...bleman in wood dated 1600 A.D., ...preserved with the *atpati* turban ...*dar jama* which characterises that ...a near-perfect state of wear.

...section of wood carvings includes a ...of tiny, marionette-like figurines ...*shikhar*, a model temple elevation which was mounted on top of Palitana temples around 1600 A.D. and small figurines from the Cambay hoard found near Ahmedabad, the main section of which rests in the Baroda Museum today. But Khandalawala's first love has always been miniature paintings, and it is to these that the major part of the exhibition is devoted.

Various schools of painting from Rajasthan and the Pahari regions are represented by outstanding examples in Khandalawala's collection. And stray documents from eastern India and the Jain school make the selection broad-based enough to cover most major schools of painting. A unique series is the "Gita Govinda", the Pahari painting of the Basohli School: part of a manuscript dated 1730 A.D. which rests in the Lahore and Chandigarh museums, the three folios in Khandalawala's collection contain exquisite renditions of the popular theme based on the life of Krishna.



Khandalawala's miniature painting collection: first love

Versatile Indologist: A remarkably versatile Indologist whose field of knowledge extends to virtually every aspect of Indian art, Khandalawala is not a collector alone. He has written numerous books on a range of subjects including miniature paintings from various schools, sculpture of different period, inscriptions and scriptology and even one written on the work of Amrita Shergill, a definitive work which brought that brilliant artist's paintings to the attention of the art world. "Karl Khandalawala is the perfect Renaissance scholar," said Swali admiringly, "his writings show the range of the man: the marathon book on Pahari paintings, which took him 11 years to write, remains the authoritative work on the subject. He can write with authority on Islamic art, Jain sculpture and painting, Amrita Shergill, and the scriptural evidence which corroborates Kanishka's date at 78 A.D.

Khandalawala is today regarded as an international authority on Indology and his opinions are often sought by museums around the world on ancient Indian art objects. He is on the art purchase committees of the Prince of Wales Museum, the National Museum in New Delhi, the Simla Museum and the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad, and has been chairman of the Prince of Wales Museum's board of trustees.

Unrestricted Talents: Nor are Khandalawala's talents restricted to art history alone. The benign art collector and historian is in fact a formidable criminal lawyer who ranks with the country's best, and has pleaded in a string of historic trials at the Bombay High Court. He was prosecution attorney in the Jupiter Insurance and Empire of India Life Insurance fraud cases in the '50s, which were in large part responsible for the nationalisation of the life insurance business. He was defence attorney in the celebrated Nanavati murder case in 1961, when a naval officer murdered his wife and her lover in broad daylight in a crime of passion and then gave himself up to the police. And he has handled numerous large smuggling cases, in which he represented the Customs and Central Excise Department as prosecutor. Most recently, the veteran criminal lawyer has undertaken what might be the most challenging trial of his career: the defence of Abdul Rahman Antulay, deposed chief minister of Maharashtra.

A colourful man whose career includes a stint with the Royal Indian Air Force during the World War II, Khandalawala's interests till recently included a passion for amateur riding which he was forced to give up because of back trouble. Characteristically, when the art historian was forced to give up his magnificent obsession due to the conflict caused by his appointment on various museum purchase committees, he turned with even greater passion to the collection of books on art. Khandalawala's library of art in fact rivals any institutional library in the country.

Today, Khandalawala is busy drawing up plans to start an academy of Indology in Pune, to which he will donate both his art collection and library. Awaiting the green signal from the Government, the lawyer-collector-historian has already begun modifications on family property in the city where he will house the priceless collection. Said Khandalawala: "This is my dream now, to have an academy for serious students of art history with my collection as nucleus, which can be a place for Indologists to study and work on the history of art in the subcontinent." For a man who has left no loose ends in a life of supreme achievement, the final dream should be easy in its attainment.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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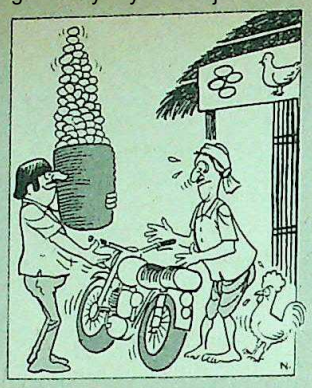
POACHED EGGS

■ The police of Sanjivareddy Nagar, Hyderabad, last month, were looking for a man with 1,000 eggs. This is probably the most unusual thing they've had to do for a long time and they are going about it with great zeal, keeping the ears cocked for the stereophonic sound of 1,000 eggs being transformed into an omelette.



It happened like this. A young man stole a motor cycle from a nearby town and drove it up to a shop in Yellareddiguda. There, he asked for eggs, lots of them. The shopkeeper was very delighted to see such a free-spending customer and chased his hens up the coop walls until they shed all the eggs they were musing over.

However, the young man said that he had no money to pay for the eggs. He offered to leave his motor cycle as surety and said that he would return in a few hours with the money. With much hesitation, the shopkeeper accepted and the young man put all his eggs into one basket and went away.

When reports last came in, he had not returned, and the police have, in a manner of speaking, got egg all over their faces.

LOVER'S REVENGE

■ He was a 24-year-old Delhi lad jilted by the girl he loved. She was a heartless young thing who had spurned him and linked her fate with someone with much more money in the bank. Hate twisted his heart and he decided on revenge.

The couple, soon after their wedding, got into a train for Madras. So did he. At

Madras Central Station, husband and wife got into a taxi and cruised down Mount Road. Jilted lover found a humble auto-rickshaw and puttered off in their wake. The taxi stopped at a hotel and the lad followed them in.

This was where things went wrong. The lad had hidden himself in a vacant room, planning to do his nefarious deed when darkness cloaked his actions, but a sweeper discovered him hiding in an almirah and ran away screaming.

When the police hauled lover boy out of the niche, the deadly weapon he possessed turned out to be a pathetic little toy 'revolver'.

BEER BASH

■ It was a spirited time for the workers of a beverage company recently. The company truck was carting several thousand bottles of the foamy stuff from Vijayawada to Hyderabad when disaster struck at a place called Komarabunda near Kodad. In no time at all, beer gurgled all over the highway to the sound of breaking glass.

Even as some very drunk flies buzzed thirstily around, the bottles that had survived the crash were piled neatly by the side of the road. To protect them from flies and other animals, the company posted its workers there. The guard duty lasted about three days, while investigators from the insurance company swarmed over the site.

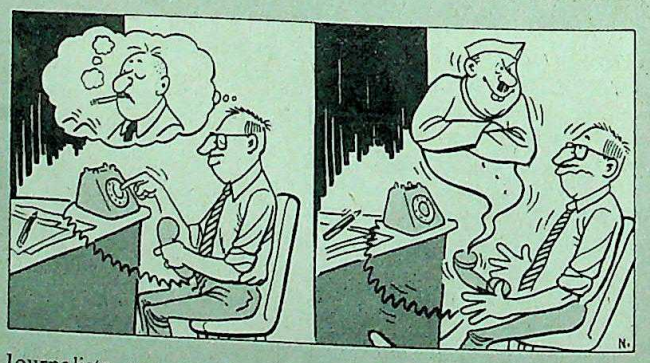
They didn't however look in the right direction be-

cause the guards had a field day with the 2,000-odd bottles. A percentage of the beer went down their throats and the rest was sold at discounted rates to nearby liquor shops. At the end of a profitable three days, all that could be seen of the huge stack was one solitary bottle sitting forlornly on the road with four or five men squatting around it, deciding who (hic!) would have the last swallow.

DIAL A VOTE

■ 'Fight elections, have phone'. That seems to be the latest slogan in that public-spirited organisation, Delhi Telephones. The municipal elections last fortnight in the capital showed that even this fabled tortoise could move very quickly when it had to.

Early one morning, a journalist called a fellow hack. What he got was a very proud ruling party candidate flaunting the fact of his having got a telephone in record time.



Journalists are very touchy people, almost as touchy as ruling party candidates, and this journalist immediately got on the line to some powerful people he knew.

It appeared that a few extremely zealous people in the organisation, bending over backwards in their eagerness to oblige a ruling party candidate, had clipped the lines to the journalist's phone, and had connected them to the politician's instead.

The other parties immediately made political capital out of it; the best comment, however, came from a daily which advised the journalist to "assist the candidate in his campaigning. When he wins, it will all be straightened out".

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DURAI

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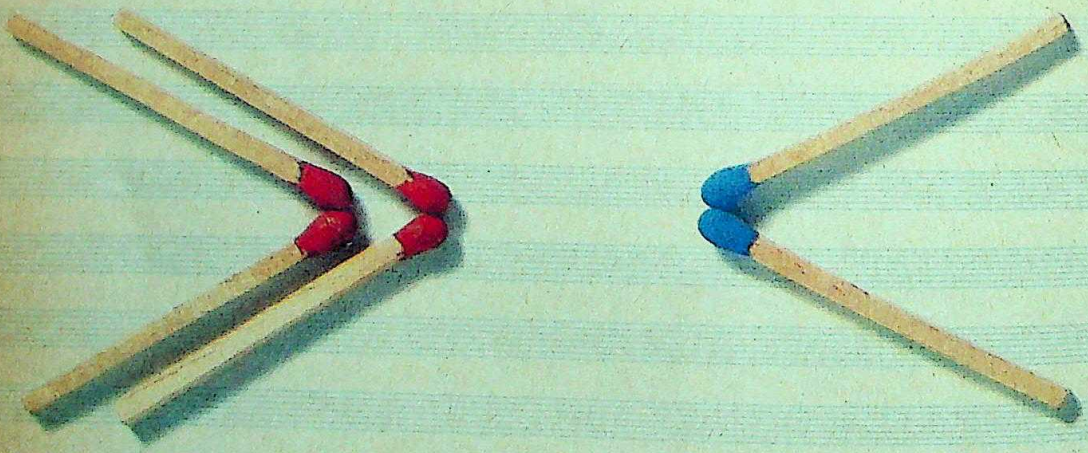

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"We Think Positive"

...EL Y hours before the Indian cricket ...for the West Indies the new captain ...24, met INDIA TODAY *for an ...interview despite his hectic ...laconic in his replies and skirting ...of controversial issues, he nonethe-...d an infectious air of self-... Excerpts:*

...The team you are leading to the West ...fairly different from the one that ...kistan. What do you think of the ...and the new line-up?

...don't think there is really much of ...ge. It is only in the spin bowling ...ent. Doshi has gone out and Ven-...ran has come in. So I don't think ...ges are all that major, except that ...Vishwanath's batting.

...Do you think Vish-...absence will be all ...ly felt?

...Well, I think he's ...great player. It's just ...a little out of touch ...g through a bad ...

...You have often been ...to England's Ian ...But when Botham ...as captain his per-...suffered. Do you ...ar fears on that ...

...I don't really think ...sibilities of a cap-...away from his per-...It differs from person to person. ...m, it could have just been a bad ...was going through. Personally, I ...good to have that extra responsibi-...field; you have to give that much ...rt when you are leading. I think ...I expect to put in more than 100 ...effort because I'm the captain.

...You must be quite disappointed with ...team's performance in Pakistan. ...think the loss of morale will affect ...performance in the West Indies?

...don't want to talk about the Pakis-... That's over now. We should talk ...future and what we have to face ...Indies. With a new series, there ...approach, new thinking and every-...concentrated on planning for the ...es. For example, in England we ...very good cricket, but after that ...was concentrated on preparing ...season. Now the Pakistan series is over, ...say that it was a bad patch for the country. But I'd like to say that it was entirely due to bad fielding that we lost that series.

Q. ***How do you rate our chances against the West Indies?***

A. We have hardly played against the West Indies recently. The last time we played against them was in 1979 in India and before that, if my memory serves me right, in 1976. But I'd say that we—most of the boys—don't really know their strengths. No doubt, it is a very good side. They have good bowlers and a well-balanced team. But we have always performed well in the West Indies in the past. It's difficult to say, but we should come out well. We are very positive in our thinking.

Q. ***Your own performance in Pakistan was not quite up to your usual standards. What do you think went wrong?***

Kapil Dev: "I'd like to change our approach"

A. I wouldn't say I did too badly in my bowling. I agree, I didn't bat too well, but I got 24 wickets in six Tests, and this was despite the fact that we just bowled one innings each time; we never got a chance to get them out twice. So I just bowled five innings in which I got 24 wickets. I am fairly happy with my bowling. But I am not happy with my batting.

Q. ***Will it be awkward, in any way, for you to captain a side with Gavaskar as just another player?***

A. Not at all. One thing I'd like to make very clear is that good sportsmen, who are really good at their game, don't ever feel that they are playing under somebody. Like when I was playing under somebody, I didn't feel that I was under that person, I just felt that I had to play my best for the team. And I'd expect the same from them too.

Q. ***What do you think Gavaskar's role will be in this series?***

A. Firstly, he can put more time and effort into his batting. Secondly, due to his experience and seniority, he can advise me all the time.

Q. ***How would you rate the new youngsters on the team?***

A. They are very talented and from what I have seen, they already have a very professional touch. With a lot of hard work and determination, they will develop into very good players for the country in the future. Young players like Maninder, Shivram, Ashok and Gursharan are very talented. They are going to meet some good players on this tour and if they put their everything into the game, they can develop into outstanding players.

Q. ***There was a lot of controversy while the Pakistan series was on about players demanding more money and a system of gradation according to seniority. Do you think the demands were justified?***

A. The money part, I don't even want to think about now. I'm concentrating on the West Indies rather than on money. I don't really know what is going on now. We have requested a couple of things, which is very different from demanding. We did not demand anything. It's up to the board now.

Q. ***The other major controversy was regarding umpiring, which has now become a serious international issue. What do you think is the answer?***

A. I don't really want to talk about the Pakistan trip. I am a sportsman and what I like to do is play, not go into these controversies. That's the board's job. Everybody knows what's happening, it's useless talking about these things.

Q. ***What are your views on the manager of a touring side? Should it be a professional manager or someone like Fatehsingh Gaekwad, who has more of a diplomatic role?***

A. I'd rather talk about cricket than officials. But one thing is that we should have managers like we saw in Pakistan, people like Intikhab Alam. A player who has retired recently can be advantageous in many ways.

Q. ***Now that you have become captain, do you intend making changes in terms of approach or training?***

A. Yes, definitely. I'd like to play positive cricket. Winning and losing don't really matter if we play good cricket. This is one thing on which I'd like to change the thinking. The other thing is that I am a firm believer in hard work and lots of practice.

Q. ***One of our biggest weaknesses has been poor fielding. What are you planning to do about that and where do you think our other weaknesses lie?***

A. I think my manager and I will devote more time to fitness and fielding. Fitness while on tour is more important than anything because when you're in peak fitness you can do much better.

Q. ***Has fitness been neglected in the past?***

A. No, I wouldn't say that it has been neglected, it's only that the approach to motivating the boys to do more, by way of practice and devoting more time to fielding and fitness, is needed. I am going to put a lot of time into fielding. This time we will get a lot of time because we stay in each port for 10 to 12 days. We're going to put in a lot of work on the weaknesses.

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PICTURES BY IQBAL MUNIR

Kapil in action at Lahore: career-best figures

Maninder Singh in the fourth Test: under-bowled

CRICKET

A Fresh Start

WITH the refurbished Indian team having left for the West Indies last week, the focus of attention for cricket fans has already shifted to the Caribbean. But even though the recently-concluded Test series in Pakistan will best be given a quiet burial, it was obvious that the mauling the Indian team received had taught some vital lessons.

Former Indian cricket captain BISHEN SINGH BEDI *was commissioned to cover the Pakistan series exclusively for* INDIA TODAY. *In this, the last of his reports, he looks at the last two Tests at Lahore and Karachi and also the composition of the new team under its new leader, Kapil Dev. His report:*

WITH the Pakistan series decided overwhelmingly in favour of Imran Inc before the teams went into the final two Tests, it was widely expected that some of the pressures would be lifted off the Indian tourists and they would come back with a vengeance, if only to salvage some of the lost pride. Lahore offered them a glorious opportunity to do so when, on a dampish track, the tourists had the pleasant choice of fielding first. The opportunity, as the record books show, was totally wasted. Once again sloppy fielding, especially in the slips, let the Indian bowling attack down and the man to profit the most was Mudassar Nazar.

For sheer consistency, Mudassar matched the brilliance of Zaheer and the sheer grit of Miandad. But I would still hesi bracket him among the greats of Pa cricket. Mudassar seems to inspire mor fidence in the opposition than his own Like Chetan Chauhan, Mudassar has limitations and he manages to play within them. His biggest utility is as a man. He is a dressing-room delight a popular with his colleagues. But w carried his bat through the innings t late his father Nazar Mohammed, he diately became the toast of all Pak such a term can be applied to produ bound Pakistan.

Having won the toss and got the break, courtesy Kapil Dev, the b should really have gone for the b sadly, this vital ingredient for vic

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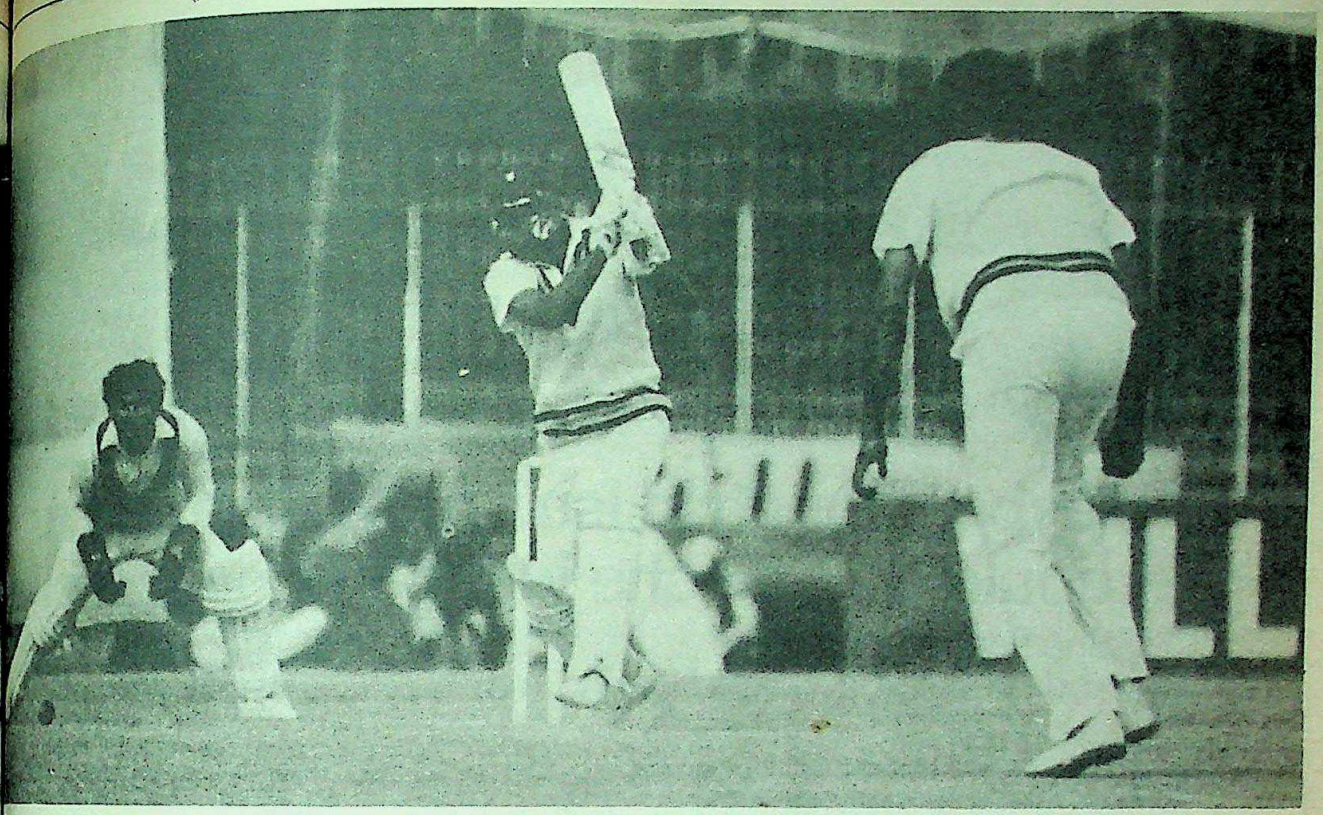
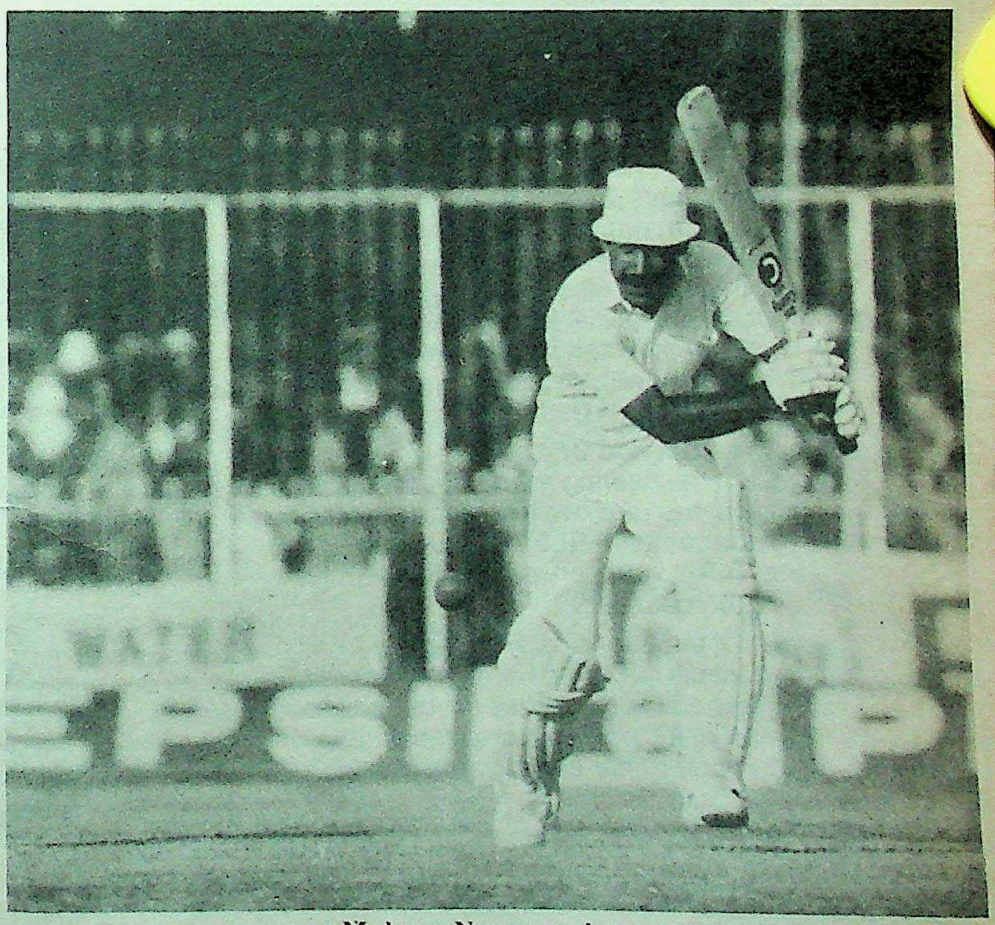


Mohinder on his way to third century at Karachi: true grit

ing from the Indian psyche. Those with the nuances of a drying wicket have realised the importance of em- spinners as early as possible. India's ar Singh, taking over the role of pinner from Dilip Doshi, was given over before lunch on the opening Imran Khan was quick to point out: had fielded first, I would have thrown pinners after half an hour."

ll Draw: Even though Kapil Dev to his own at last, with career-best of 8 for 85, the home team reached ps of safety through the sole determi- of Mudassar. The best ball of the day ome Kapil bowled to dismiss Zaheer behind. It was good to see the had making amends but once again a concentrated team effort negated had been achieved. It is becoming repetitious to say that the Indian was atrocious but after the lessons of ious Tests one would have expected ference on the improvement chart. e game itself drifted into a dull draw weather taking its own toll. The only ing feature from the Indian point of Mohinder Amarnath underscoring in the need for grit and determina- Test level. Off the field, the highlight lavish dinner hosted by the Board of for Cricket in Pakistan (BCCP) where Zia was in a generous mood.

e can understand him rewarding the



Mudassar Nazar: consistency

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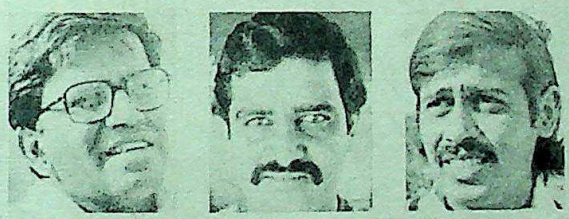
Students invading the field at the Karachi Test: notorious reputation

n heroes with handsome bonuses but s to have been rather undiplomatic in ing an award of Rs 25,000 each for ar and Vishwanath, the former for ing 7,000 runs in Tests and the latter ating a world record for conti- Test appearances. The cash for the two Indians have not been kindly in some official quarters as by some members of the BCCP. her government has acknowled- e performance of players from countries with monetary benefits e fact that Vishwanath's final ur was hardly a memorable one help matters either.

arachi offered the Indians yet e opportunity to redeem them- They had nothing to lose and ing to gain while the home team ery little motivation left except through the motions. In such ngless circumstances, the viability Test series came in for some heavy m from all sides. As it turned out, dians decided to convert the final into a sort of trial for the West Indies meant inflicting excruciating boredom e hapless Karachi crowds. Even the dians must have derived little pleasure adding the sixth Test into the record India took nearly two full days to 593 for 8 before mercifully declaring. ge did the tourists show any sense of y of purposefulness regarding their es.

edictably, the Test faded out into a awn. For a while, Pakistan looked like g some life into the game but their were thwarted by a bunch of student s who decided to invade the field ea on the fourth day. Pakistan at that were 420 for 6 and shaping well to ise the Indian batting on the final day.

KARACHI has, of course, a notorious reputation for such mini-riots. Nearly every touring team in the recent past has experienced match interruptions at the National Stadium. In this particular case, it was a demonstration against the arrest of some members of the student community. The Indian ambassador and the consul general in Karachi were actively concerned about the safety of the Indian team and their official vehicles came in for some stoning. But it was a farcical situation and was very soon brought under control. The Indian cricketers, however, were reluctant to take the field and quite rightly so. There was no concrete guarantee of safety given by the BCCP. But the locals felt cheated by the Indian refusal and the gossip columnist for the *Pakistan Times* sneeringly referred to the day's play as "Shree 420 of Indians", which incidentally was Pakistan's score when the match was interrupted for the day.



(From left) Doshi, Vishwanath and Venkataraghavan: significant changes

The game, however, resumed on the final day with Imran's overnight declaration being more governed by his personal quest for the 40-wicket mark in the series which he, deservingly, eventually got. A scorching yorker which disposed of Gavaskar will satisfy Imran for a long time to come. Purely for the record, there were three unexciting centuries: Ravi Shastri reasserting himself in the makeshift opening spot, Mudassar Nazar completing his fourth hundred of the series and Mohinder Amarnath forcing the Pakistanis to help him get a farcical hundred, his third of the series, in the mandatory overs. But a hundred is a hundred in Test cricket and it earned Mohinder the "man of the series" award from the Indian side.

There was no doubt about Imran clinching the issue for the Pakistanis. His tremendous impact on the series as a whole cannot be more emphasised. Throughout, he was in total control of his mental and physical faculties. Success did not come to him on a platter. He worked extremely hard for it and in the bargain earned the respect and loyalty of his colleagues. Omar Qureishi summed up the Karachi Test very aptly when he said: "This Test will be eminently forgettable. Let it rest in peace in the record books. One must not speak ill of the dead."

Significant Changes: Understandably, the Indian team was anxious to get back to Bombay. It was rather shabby of the BCCP that not a single official turned up to see the Indians off. Whether it was a petulant show of resentment against the type of cricket we played or just sheer callousness, it certainly was unforgivable.

There was little time or inclination for post-mortems. It was gracefully acknowledged by the Indian manager and the Indian captain that "the better side won". These two gentlemen were understandably sore with the "application and fitness" of some of the Indian players which really made the difference between the two teams. The Indians clearly played much below their ability.

The team for the West Indies has already left and the changes are significant. Gavaskar has made way for Kapil Dev at the helm. It is casting no aspersions on Sunil's ability as a captain. He has had a good run captaining the country 40 times and he has had his share of glory. But during the Pakistan tour, it appeared that Sunil's enthusiasm for the job was waning and it is possible that his own form suffered a bit as a result. This change should come as a relief for Sunil and his batting should flourish once again in the Carribbean.

As an optimist, I am looking forward to the change at the top as a happy sign for Indian cricket. Sunil himself has been very generous in hailing Kapil's elevation to captaincy and at the same time assuring him of his total support. Venkataraghavan too should lend a stable and balanced element to the fortunes of Indian cricket. It is sad to see Vishy and Doshi go but sentiments must not cloud sober judgement. The Indian board deserves special praise for sending an extra player instead of a second official. The conscientious Hanumant Singh as manager should be able to handle his end admirably. It is up to the team to do the same.

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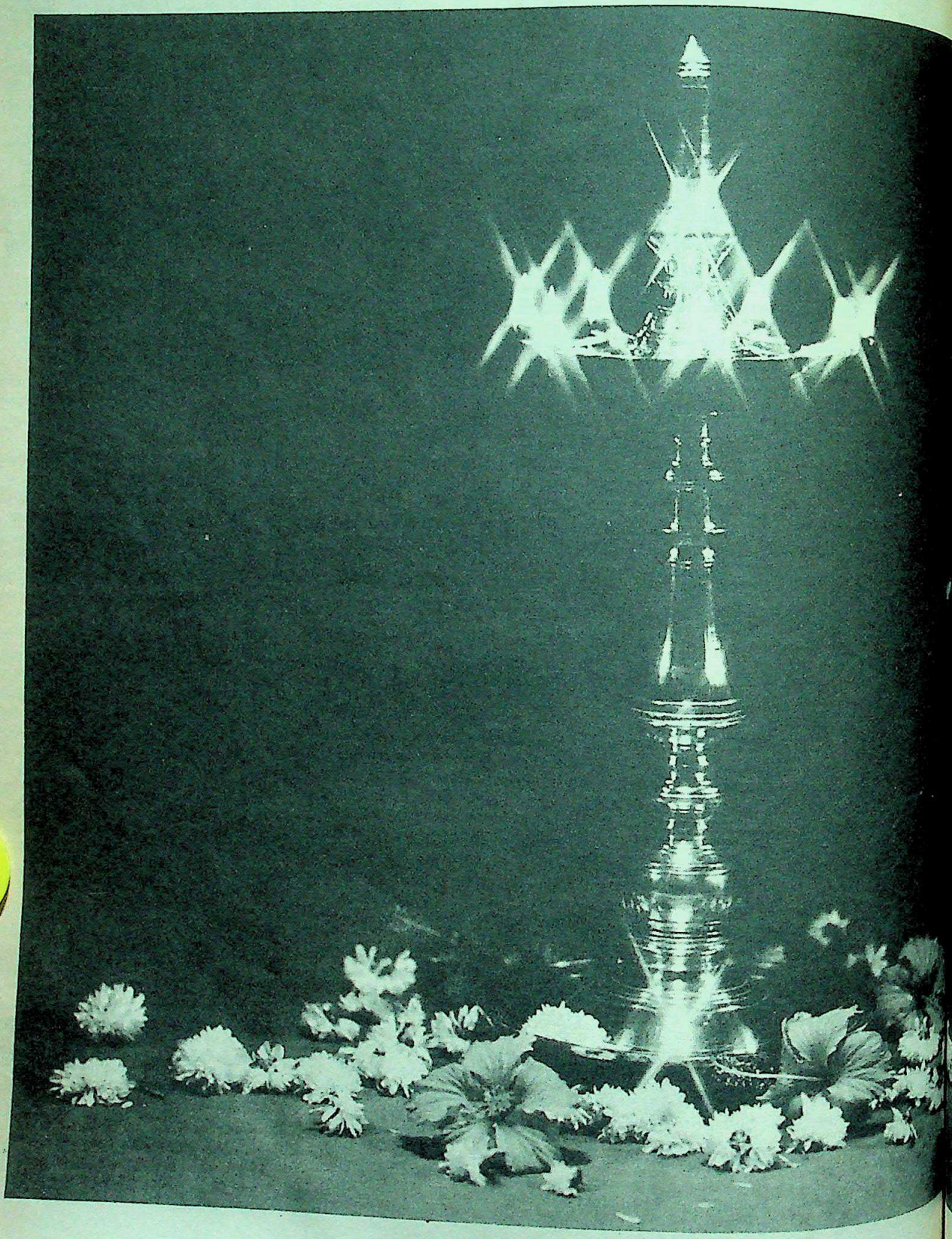
Many happy return



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PHOOLAN DEVI

End Of The Trail

THE WHOLE sequence had a touch of the charade, as if a carefully-planned rehearsal had gone awry on the opening day. When the curtain finally went up on the surrender of Phoolan Devi and 25 other dacoits in Bhind, a district headquarters about 75 km from Gwalior last week, many pieces of the jigsaw leading to the momentous event remained missing. And as many myths about the queen of criminal violence, whose reported exploits had mesmerised the public mind, for over two years lay shattered in the dust.

After the vigorous media build-up she had been accorded, Phoolan Devi, the dramatic centre of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Arjun Singh's extravagant public relations exercise, turned out to be the chief disappointment. She was neither nebulous nor nubile, as countless reporters and writers including the illustrious Khushwant Singh who went on her trail last year, had imagined her. Nor was she malevolently dangerous—no more or less, that is, than any other sizeable dacoit gang—as she had been made out to be. Worst, it became certain that she is not the only woman dacoit in existence, and it is yet to be established that she was a gangleader supreme—in fact, it was clearly understood that she operated only in close collusion with her present lover Man Singh or other lovers in the past who remained *de facto* leaders and organisers.

Anti-climax: Instead, the "daredevil dacoit queen", the "black beauty of the bandit world" or the *dasyu sundari* (dacoit beauty) known to sport bell-bottom trousers and bobbed hair, turned out to be a drab-looking, highly moody, childishly petulant, and disastrously short-tempered girl on a rampage. There was little about her to suggest the high-minded and seductive woman out to avenge her honour and redeem the humiliations of a tormented past. Even the police officer responsible for negotiating the terms of her surrender, Rajendra Chaturvedi, superintendent of police (SP) of Bhind district, described her as "brash, hasty, immature and short-tempered," saying that, "it was the press who blew her image totally out of proportion."

The gradually built-up myth that has grown about a woman defending her honour is as fake as the tales of her sensational looks; the impression of her as an original, innovative, wildly daring and fearsome victor in life is nothing but a cover-up, more likely than not, for a neurotic, highly-strung, evil-tempered and foul-mouthed victim of life, a casualty w[illegible] has been made more bleak by the e[illegible] celebrity her offences have brought [illegible] M.D. Sharma, Deputy Inspector G[illegible] (Chambal range) of the Phoolan De[illegible] nomenon: "Most people in cities [illegible] that drop-outs from society are an [illegible] middle class feature. They're not. P[illegible] is a classic example of a rural drop-o[illegible] took a lot of persuasion to be brou[illegible] to her senses."

Unlikely Bandit: It is h[illegible] believe looking her slight short fig[illegible] is under five ft in he[illegible] her ravaged face—tha[illegible] the woman who terrorise[illegible] sections of the popula[illegible] two states. It is hard to [illegible] this scruffy, edgy, nerv[illegible] as someone who toted a [illegible] her wrists seem too painf[illegible] to even carry one aro[illegible] she sits huddled in the [illegible] her family—three sister[illegible] ther, old mother and f[illegible] and her gang, it is imp[illegible] to believe that this sad [illegible] creature was capable of [illegible] scale butchery, countl[illegible] nappings, and delibera[illegible] tances of cold-blooded [illegible] Almost the only time h[illegible] light up and her face bre[illegible] a smile is when she is [illegible] children; at all other ti[illegible] retreats into sullen si[illegible] erupts snarling and mo[illegible] foul abuse.

But Phoolan D[illegible] prized product of mostly [illegible] fantasy and some cold-b[illegible] fact, didn't take long to [illegible] a vital prestige issue—[illegible] that set two state police s[illegible] at war and a calculatin[illegible] minister at extracting th[illegible] mum populist benefit. [illegible] lan's surrender—accor[illegible] senior Madhya Pradesh [illegible] officials involved it has [illegible] imminent since last su[illegible] was kept a closely-g[illegible]

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Clockwise from top [illegible] page): Three views of Ph[illegible] face in close-up; a grim [illegible] behind a barred window [illegible] building where she surre[illegible] and handing over her [illegible] Arjun Singh

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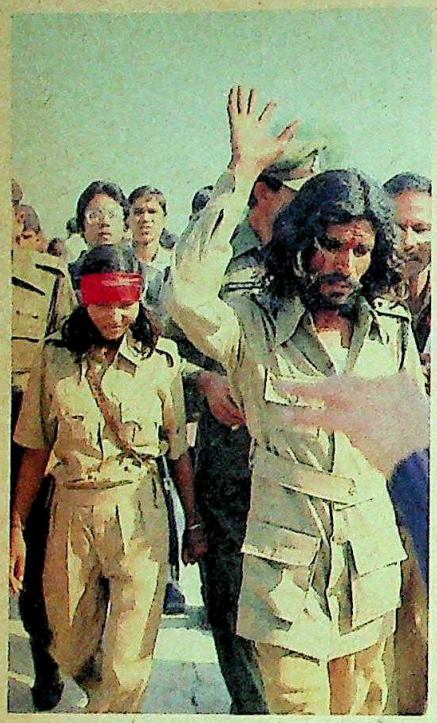
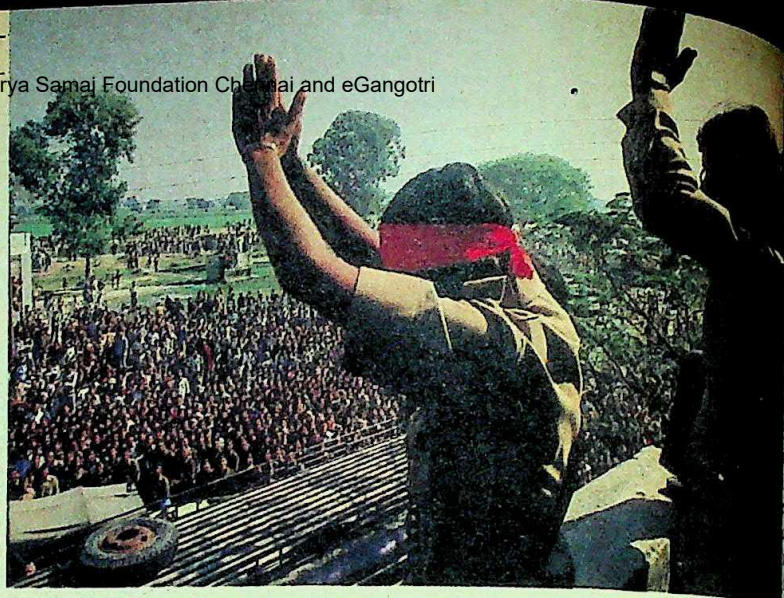
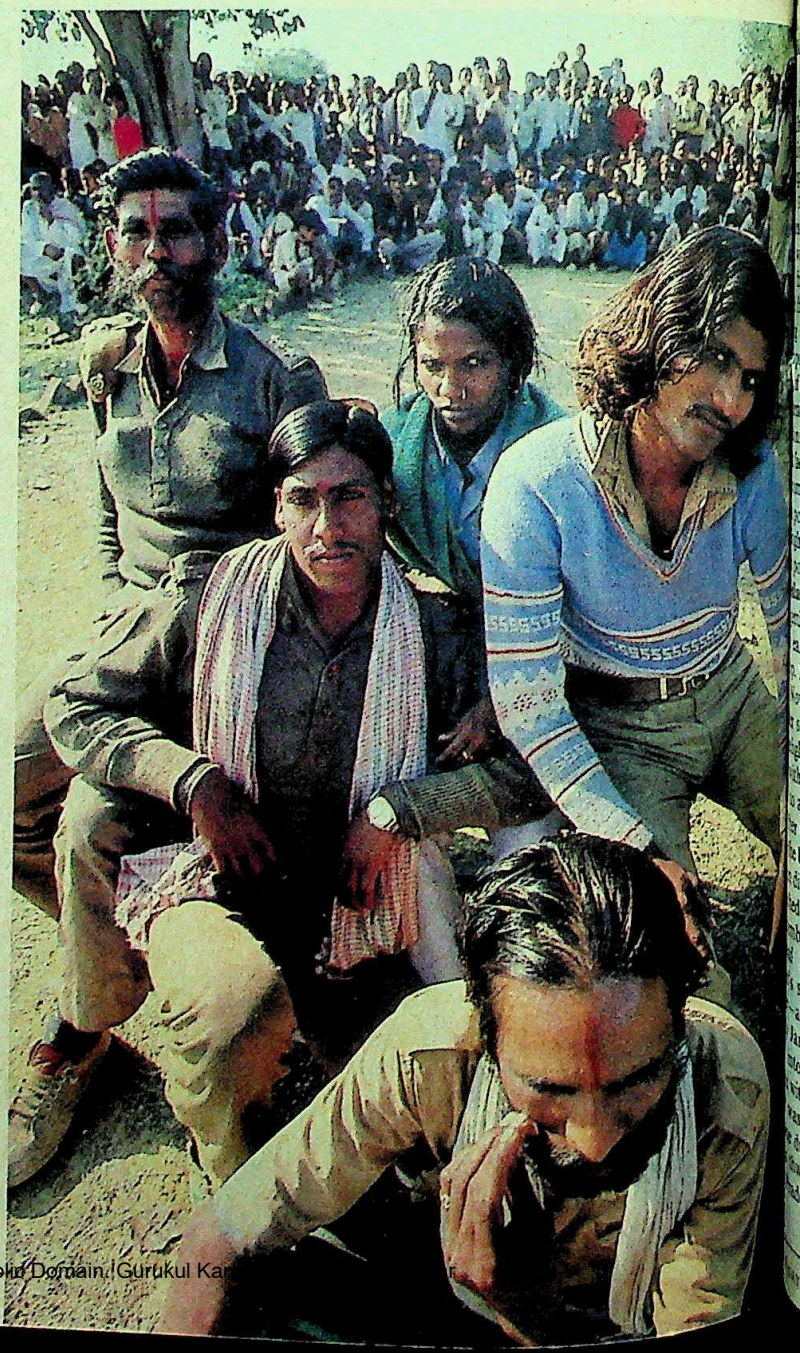
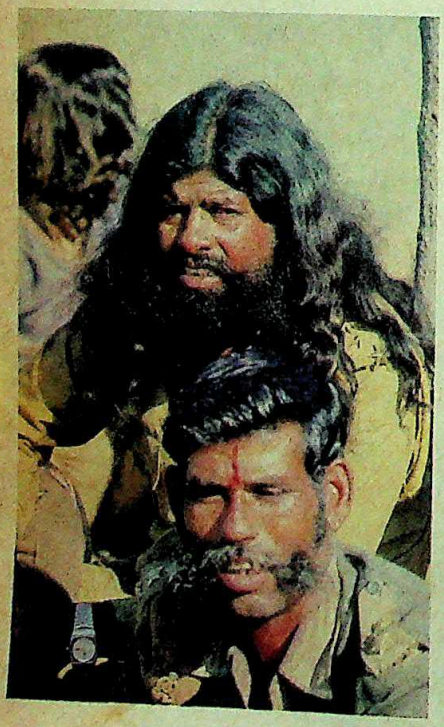






Clockwise from top: Dacoits Phoolan Devi and Man Singh after the surrender; hailing the audience following the ceremony; members of Ghanshyam's gang; and gangleader Ghanshyam with brother Karan Singh



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ment secret, then slowly publi- section of the national press had warned at least 24 hours in ad- finally mounted as a spectacular show. Sadly, the whole exercise

days before Phoolan's surrender at the Parade Ground in Bhind, housed in a distant Irrigation bungalow together with her Singh, her entire family and her three days before she actually on February 12, the Madhya police had been announcing her which was postponed thrice. Not use Phoolan wanted her family before the event but equally nasty row erupted between Uttar and Madhya Pradesh police

Rivalry: On January 6, when Pradesh police officials quietly over Phoolan's family from their Lekhpur Guda in Uttar Pradesh's trict to Bhind, the Uttar Pradesh tered a case of kidnapping agai- of Bhind and accompanying A day later when another con- nt over to bring Man Singh's the Uttar Pradesh police simply six policemen of Bhind district a sub-inspector. The Uttar police force's pique at having the Phoolan's farewell to arms stolen was so great, that acrimonious s were exchanged at the highest act, the rivalry to acquire Phoolan e so embittered that a Madhya policeman despatched to "kidnap" l's family even fired at the Uttar police giving them chase.

ation Efforts: First attempts to- ing Phoolan to surrender were arly July 1982. Informers were of Malkhan Singh, released on pa- vember, dilly-dallied as another soon after his would have taken ght from him. Ghanshyam's re- h Malkhan were strained and he accept his mediation.

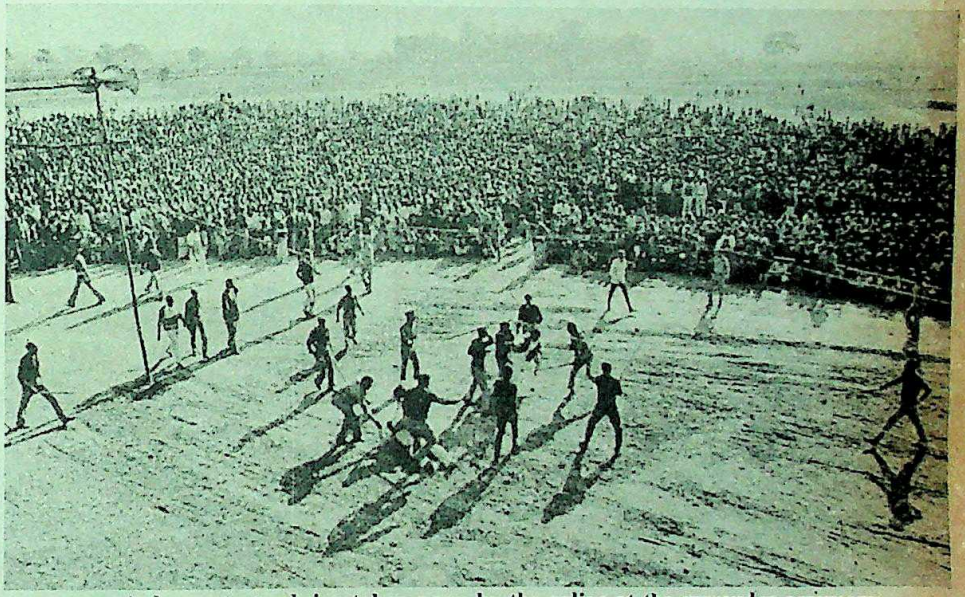
Ghanshyam's attempt to surre- the Uttar Pradesh police at Rampura district on November 18 failed, he ed Chaturvedi and they finally met ber 20, Muslim, another dacoit received feelers for his and surrender—they had once been also got in touch with Chaturvedi. January, Muslim and his men had to the Umri police circle while with her gang was in the Nayagaon was understood that they would be during negotiations.

art any attempt by the furious desh police on the dacoits' life, security on the border was tightened, and at 12 points along the boundary, pickets were posted to keep an eye on the neighbouring police—especially the Provincial Armed Constabulary—who made forays into Madhya Pradesh. There was disagreement between Madhya Pradesh policemen, too. On January 26, a police party appeared abruptly in the Umri area and fired at Muslim and his men. The dacoit leader was shot in the abdomen but dragged himself for 10 km and went into hiding, from where he sent Chaturvedi a message. The alarmed Chaturvedi arranged for Muslim's treatment first in Bhind and later in Gwalior, where he is now recovering in police custody.

Precipitous Steps: A panicky Phoolan fled with her gang soon after the encounter; so did Ghanshyam, hiding in Datia district near Seondha. As far as they knew, they had been betrayed. By this time an order from Bhopal said that the surrender must take place—if at all—by February 10 since it had taken too long already. Chaturvedi, playing dangerously, went unarmed and alone into the ravines looking for Ghanshyam and Phoolan to lure them back. He succeeded but only after convincing them that the policemen had shot at Muslim accidentally.

Similarly, on February 6, the Madhya Pradesh police suddenly started combing operations in the Seondha *dang* (forest) in Datia district knowing full well that the Ghanshyam gang was there waiting for the surrender. Ghanshyam could well have been killed that day except that Bhopal got to know about the operation and angrily ordered that it be suspended immediately. The orders were reportedly issued from the chief minister's secretariat.

Once, however, Phoolan became the Madhya Pradesh police's property, the chief minister swung into action to put up the most effective show for her surrender. Early morning on February 12, he appeared on the roof of the local school at Bhind to receive homage from the gathered dacoits. Although the press—domestic and international—had turned out in full force thanks to publicity of the Madhya Pradesh police and public relations department, the audience in the grounds below was no more than a crowd of about 4,000, a sad come down from the 30,000 who had congregated in the same ground last summer to witness the surrender of dacoit Malkhan Singh (INDIA TODAY, July 15, 1982). No sooner had the ceremony started, with the dacoits lining up to shed their weapons and cartridge belts before portraits of Mahatma Gandhi and Durga Mata, and garlanding the chief minister, a few members of the audience began to shout slogans and shout abuse at the chief minister. One of them tried to throw a stone, while screaming at the top his voice: "*Goli ke badle goli. Daku ko hero banate ho. Churiyan pehan ke behto.*" (A Bullet for a bullet. You are making heroes of dacoits. Why don't you wear bangles and sit at home.) Quickly pounced upon by policemen he had to be carried out, and the crowd grew restive. In fact, it was the barrage of cameramen blocking the crowd's view of the dacoits that disturbed and scattered the audience, even as the chief minister smugly basked in the enormous publicity the spectacle would bring him.



A demonstrator being taken away by the police at the surrender ceremony

Perfect Irony: It was the perfect irony, of course, that the dacoits, even at the moment of their social rehabilitation were being exploited just as they had been at the outset of their terrorist careers to seek an

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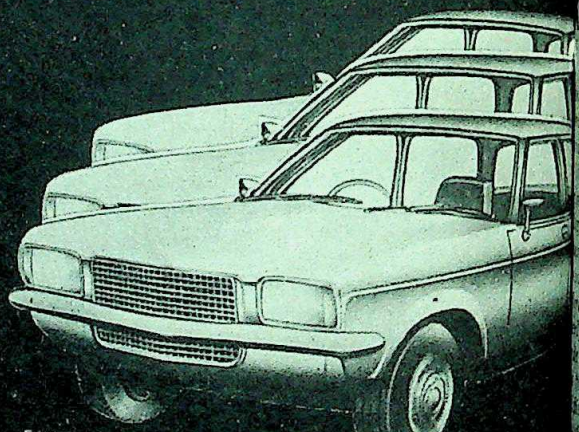

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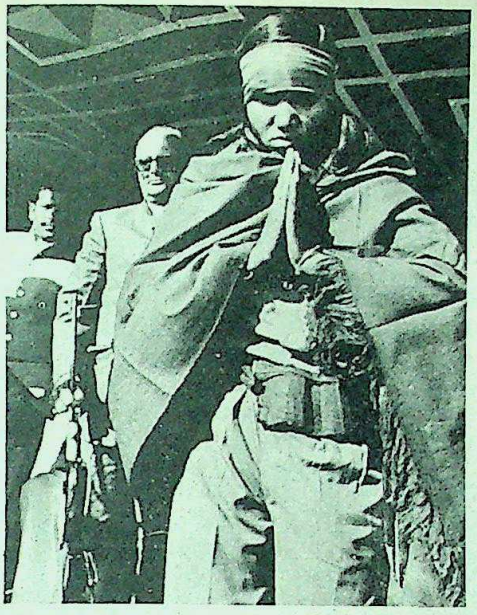
existence as desperadoes outside the ...s. For much as the romanticised ...ers have us believe, the act of their ... the truth is quite the reverse: any ...h connected in an anti-dacoit effort ...ble that being a dacoit is one of the ...meanest ways of living. And, that ...'s offer to surrender, because they ...d out by the sheer physical hardship ...existence. Moving under cover, like ... from forest to forest, ravine to ...ing without food for days, organis... ...reorganising themselves, while con... ...ing pursued by the police in encoun... ...are the worst survivors of all.

...t Karan Singh, elder brother of ...ows Ghanshyam Singh who also ...d last week, is a tall whiskered ...n Uttar Pradesh policeman's uni... ...e of a gang of eight, which also ...Phoolan in the past, he remembers ...the ravines in 1974. The local priest ...age had, in collusion with the ...acquired his family's rightful property. In revenge, he and Ghanshyam killed the priest. The path to other dacoities, kidnappings, murders—a total of 56 offences today and an award of Rs 7,000 by the Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh governments on his head—followed. Both brothers were once in Malkhan Singh's gang; when Malkhan gave up last year, they carried on. Easily one of the most powerful dacoit gangs operating in the region, armed with self-loading rifles that make Phoolan's Mausers and 12-bore rifles look like toys, Ghanshyam and Karan Singh have clear memories of the nearly 10 years they spent as dacoits. Ghanshyam, also known as Baba, remembers going without any food for up to four days frequently. Karan Singh, married unlike his brother, only recalls being able to visit his family once in all those years. Says the long-haired, bearded, vicious-looking Ghanshyam: "We had enough of it. Enough of that life. Now that our enmity is avenged we can live like normal human beings."



Phoolan Devi after surrendering her weapons to Arjun Singh: well-orchestrated publicity

Munni Bai, a dark, strikingly-featured,

...VIEW

...Wanted ...evenge"

...UTTAR Pradesh's notorious dacoit ...an Devi is nobody's idea of a lethal ...warrior. Built up by the media as a ...evil beauty who has terrorised parts ...ar Pradesh since her gang's horrify... ...massacre of 20 Thakurs in Behmai ...in February 1981, the infamous ...queen" fighting to avenge her ..., turns out to be someone quite ...ent: as absurdly common-looking, ...y juvenile (according to police re... ...26 years old) who is in turns moody ...rash, taciturn and abusive. Prone to ...tantrums one minute and sullen, ...silences the next, Phoolan Devi's ...completely demolishes her myth. ...ed in trousers—often khakis to go ...the police uniform she normally ...—and covered in a bright coloured ...her vaguely Nepali-looking features ...perpetually contorted in a frown. ...built, her short hair matted with ...her tongue hurling invective, Phoolan ...off more a super-brat than a fear... ...terrorist. Kept in an irrigation bu... ...some 60 km outside Bhind with her ...and other dacoits, she refused to ...with most journalists and appeared ...allergic to photographers. Over two ...managed to get some answers last ...in Bhind. Excerpts:

Q. ***How old are you?***

A. Twenty, not a day more. They lie about my age. Write that.

Q. ***How did you become a dacoit?***

A. My cousin's house was raided by dacoits. My father and my cousin's father had a long-standing dispute over property. But when dacoits came to my cousin's house, he had me accused. I was arrested for the raid and put in jail.

I only believe in Bhagwati Mata. I listened to her. She said give up your life; so I am giving up.

Q. ***But how did you become a dacoit? After meeting Vikram Malla?***

A. After I came out of jail I was bitter. I wanted to take revenge. I met Babu Singh and Vikram. I lived with Vikram. He kept me.

Q. ***Was it to avenge injustice that you became a dacoit or because of your association with Vikram?***

A. Why should I answer all these stupid questions...go away.

Q. ***Did you go to Behmai in 1981?***

A. *(No answer)*

Q. ***Were you also trying to wreak vengeance on the Thakurs of Behmai?***

A. They're dogs, dirty dogs. I won't say more.

Q. ***Why didn't you surrender to the Uttar Pradesh police?***

A. Because they're traitors. They were in league with thugs who had my brother killed. TheUttar Pradesh police are murderers.

Q. ***Your real brother?***

A. No, no, but they're traitors and killers.

Q. ***Why did you surrender?***

A. *(No reply)*

Q. ***Do you think you will marry one day or change your way of life?***

A. *(Laughs)*

Q. ***Are you afraid of your jail sentence? Are you afraid of the future?***

A. No, why should I be? I have given my demands to the police. That is the condition on which I surrendered.

Q. ***Did you give up being a dacoit because of the hard life it was?***

A. That was a hard life. This is a hard life. Life is hard—always.

Q. ***I mean, you couldn't have gone on being a dacoit all your life...***

A. No. It was not possible. I had to come out sometime. I only believe in Bhagwati Mata. I listened to her. She said give up your life, so I am giving up.

Q. ***And you have no plans for the future?***

A. No, we will see what happens in jail. It will depend on how they treat me. They (the police) have given a reassurance they will meet my demands and will look after my gang well.

Q. And if they don't meet your demands?

A. I leave all that to God. I have nothing more to say. Please leave.

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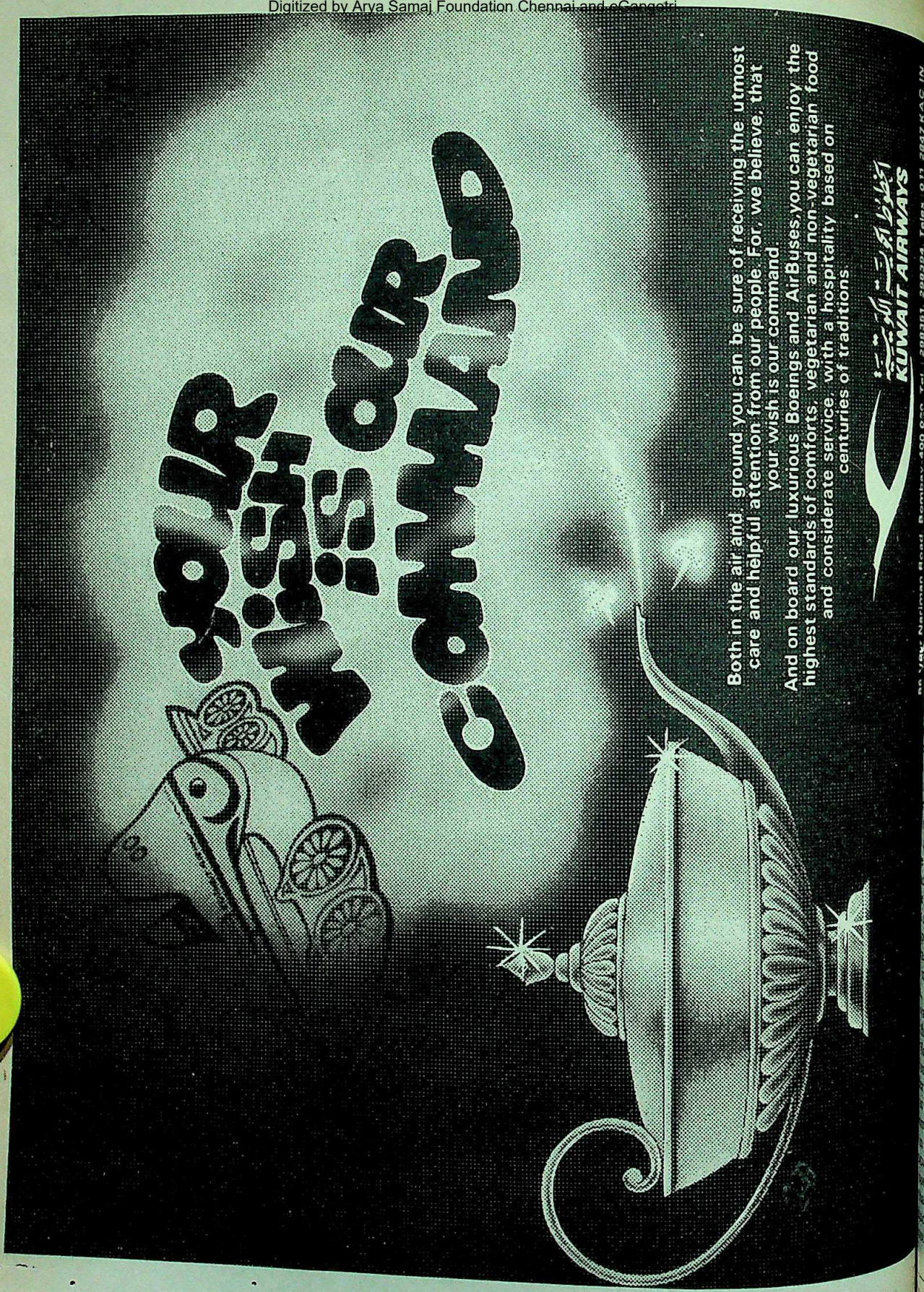

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KUWAIT AIRWAYS

d woman dacoit with her hus- Khan has been part of. s gang since 1977; both hus- wife who lived in a village in Bhind after they had been accused by yat of committing a murder. the forest they met up with and took to the itinerant life of der. "It was our circumstances to it," she says, "for five years we the only objects of worship we our weapons. Now even if we are can do what we like. We will not on the run."

t every dacoit claims a similar being falsely accused in a crime. dacoits claim motivation for dacoits from the same source: to geance on those who once victi- n.

al: Once they embarked upon the was generally the pressure of at egged them on beside the clout ed by successfully terrorising vil- r their control, and the money ugh demanding ransoms in kid- ses. Significantly, most of the surrendered in Bhind last week eable sums of cash with them, ween Rs 20,000 and Rs 40,000, pouches lined inside their clothes. oolan Devi's case, the original to turn to violence seems to be another factor: sex. Most news- p primly referring to her series of present one is Man Singh—as ", as if she were some kind of dovary of the Chambal ravines. to make the simple connection r early rejection by husband and the drift into promiscuity. impoverished parents, she was by her husband who was nearly der soon after she married him. of 13.

ceptable in her parents' home returned, and accused of com- dacoity by her uncle, she emerged ell in jail to forge a relationship m who initiated her into the trade. to the underworld of hardened she began to crack up after s killed in 1980. Putting her act e only way she knew, she tried to n Ram and Lala Ram, two men spected as being responsible for y.

while pursuing them that she was mit the brutal massacre of 20 Behmai village in Kanpur district y, March 1–15, 1981). Both the ght to kill in revenge were not in t fateful day, but the atrocity that ed with her then lover-accom- dqueem, created a fear psychosis among Thakurs and contributed to her legend.

Since then, she has drifted around, skilfully evading the police, once rumoured to have escaped to Nepal where the Government reportedly placed an award of Rs 1 lakh upon her head, and ganging up with Man Singh with whom she has remained since. Their 66 crimes, of dacoity, kidnapping, instances of murder, attempted murder and dacoity with murder, have invested them, and her in particular, with a bizarre kind of glamour, as epitomised by Hollywood stereotypes like Bonnie and Clyde.

Declining Numbers: She is not the only one. There is more than one female dacoit still at large, among them Kusuma Nain and Geeta Thakur, though Madhya Pradesh police officials claim that the number of dacoits in their state has dropped dramatically in the last two years—from about 500 in 1980–81 to about 30 at present. At least 160 have been killed in encounters with the police, while the rest are serving jail sentences. The state police has, however, only lost one head constable in encounters since 1980 when the anti-dacoity campaign was intensified in the six districts of Guna, Shivpuri, Datia, Gwalior, Bhind and Morena.

Phoolan Devi who, so far, has had her demands for surrendering acceded (she insisted that her family as well as her cow and goat to be transferred to her in Madhya Pradesh) has at least 14 more before proceeding to Gwalior jail. Among them: that she shall not be hanged, that she shall be kept in an open jail and not be handcuffed, be given A Class treatment and tried in a special court, that all cases againt her will be transferred from Uttar Pradesh to Madhya Pradesh, that safety assurances be provided for her family, along with land for them and a job for her brother. All this, she says defiantly, should be accompanied with a signed message from Rajiv Gandhi.

If Phoolan was reluctant to be photographed until the actual surrender, it was because she was under the impression that her "every picture was worth a lakh ruppes". She couldn't get that out of her mind and was furious that she was obviously being cheated out of millions of rupees by news photographers.

All this did not seem very funny early on the morning of the surrender when Phoolan started throwing tantrums and threatened to walk out if she was not given her rightful share of the money that news photographers were making off her. The situation was getting out of hand until Ghanshyam, tired of her eccentricities and her histrionics, half threatened, half bullied her back into the fold.

"She may demand anything," admits a police official, "but she will be tried through a proper legal process; only she will be guaranteed a basically human treatment." It is estimated that with the trail of crime behind her, she will spend a minimum of ten years in jail. But her strange and fascinating saga will remain alive, for no other reason, than as a reflection of the primitive and contemporary colliding in human nature and Indian society.

—SUNIL SETHI

Members of Phoolan Devi's family at Bhind before her surrender

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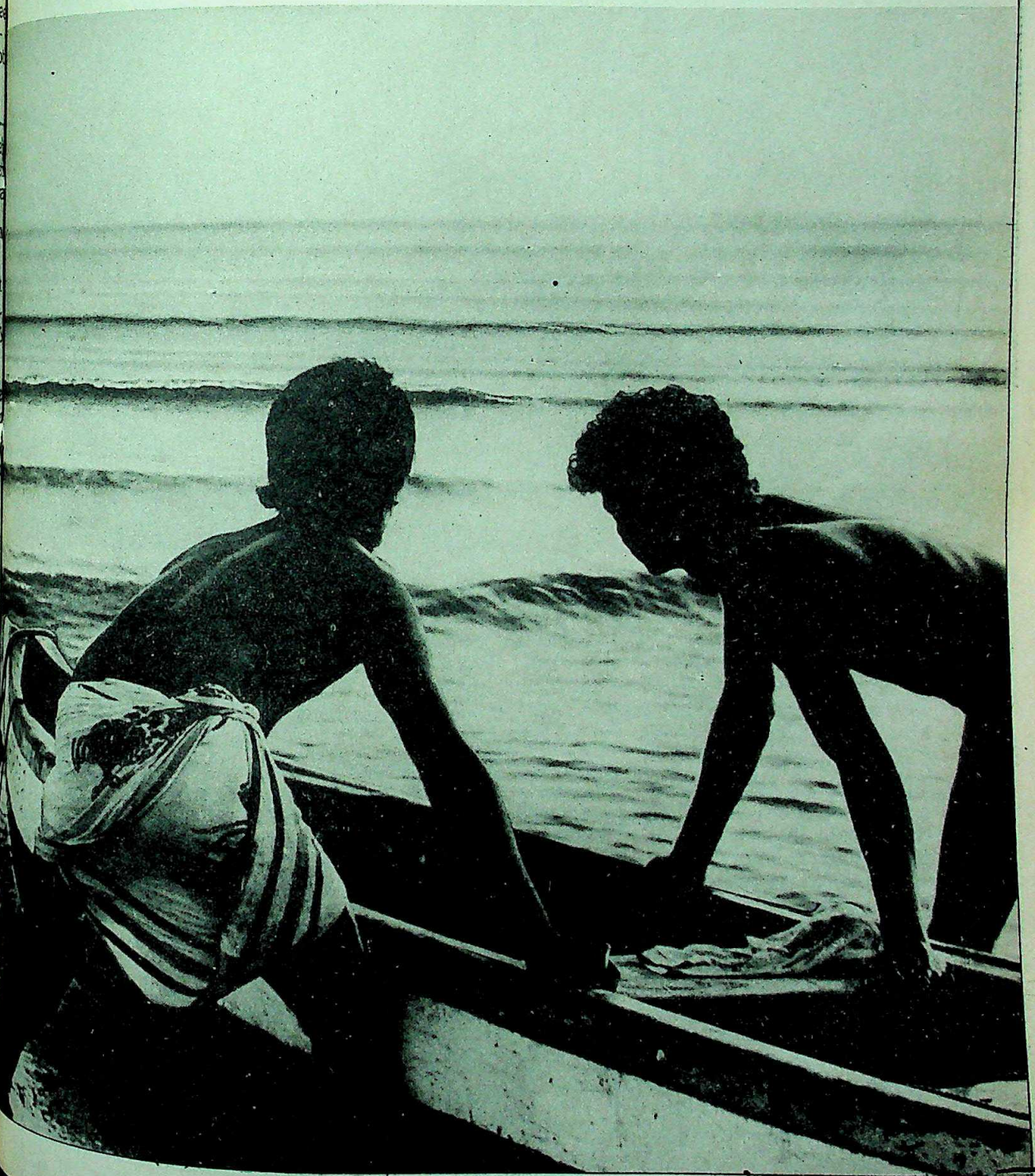

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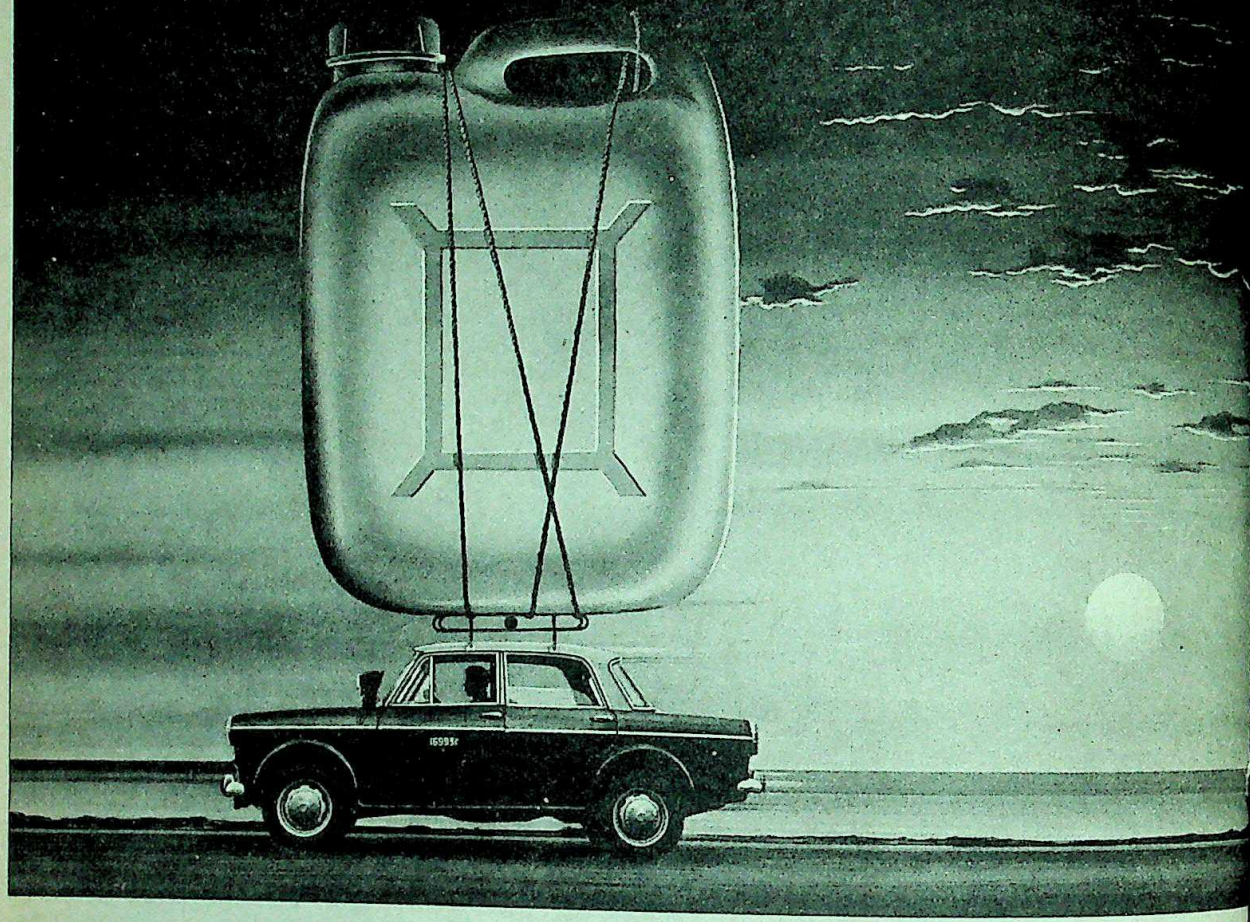

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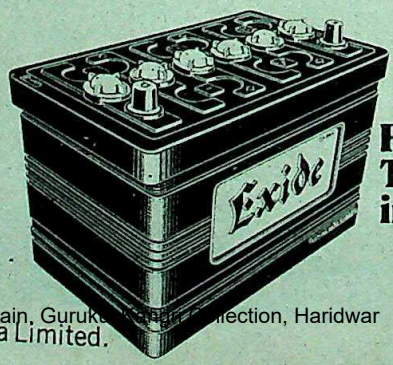

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uiem For A Rebel

HATAK: A RETURN
PIC
RAJADHYAKSHA.
Bombay. 1982. Price: Rs 45

THIS is a remarkable book, the first of its kind in Indian film criticism. It is thoroughgoing, consistent and avowedly, uncompromisingly, Marxist. As an analytical tool, Marxism has the merit of providing a clear hypothesis that seems to fit all aspects of a work of art. indeed compels—the critic to meaning of a work in its his- l context and in relation to the ther arts. Its weakness too is in ism of approach, which breeds nts an anxiety to stretch its ty to cover the entire body of times like the tailor who tries n into the clothes.

Rajadhyaksha's book, the udy of a remarkable film di- o well known outside Bengal, merits and demerits of the ll measure. Once you accept the logic thereafter is rigidly eld up by a strength of scho- clarity of terms of reference criticism. His knowledge of ak's (1925–76) work is inti- plied with concentrated pur- the stills—and there are many e specially prepared from the d with exactness to illustrate ts. The difficulty is in accepting at least in its entirety.

Systems: "All mythology," says from Marx in the book, "over- dominates and shapes the forces the imagination and by the ima- d therefore vanishes with the l mastery over them." Rajad- ends this formulation through y of archetypal images arising ective unconscious. According w view of this socio-psychologi- the ruling class maintains its through the closed system of only ancient myths but later tive ideas and models taken for out questioning) embodied in mages. Bourgeois art, through ce and ritualistic repetition of n a linear unfolding of narrative, mination of the ruling class.

Marxist art, on the other hand, invokes the same myths through the archetypes but inverts them and displaces them through the open-endedness of the epic, thus releasing their latent energy and dialectically restating the individual's identity in terms of his past to establish a larger humanism. "A work of art," says Rajadhyaksha, "if it does not actively displace the mythic system that has taken hold of its content, is itself absorbed into the system." The book shows the development of the epic-revolutionary approach to myths and archetypes in Ritwik Ghatak's work, film by film, (except *Titas Ekti Nadir Naam*, made in Bangladesh in 1973) in detail.

Ajaantrik (1958), Ghatak's second film, really begins his quest, raising "contradictory forms of perception to contradictory mythic systems" instead of unifying them as in bourgeois art. Detailed analysis of the patterns of meaning in *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961) and *Subarnarekha* (1965) follow, and a brief commentary is made on Ghatak's last film, *Jukti, Tarko ar Gapoo* (1974) which caused somewhat of a sensation among cineastes abroad recently exposed to it. Much of this analysis had been suggested earlier by Kumar Shahani (see Film Festival Directorate's book *Ritwik Ghatak*, 1982 edited by Shampa Banerjee) but has been expanded and further clarified here. The writing is serious and scholarly, and makes no concessions to the reader who cannot take the validity of the Marxist-Jungian approach for granted.

The nude in Ghatak's *Maya Darpan*: inner conflicts

Thus *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, generally regarded as Ghatak's most satisfying film, opens with a shot of Neeta (the bread-earning daughter in a refugee family from East Pakistan who dies trying to ensure the family's survival) emerging from under a large tree. Now the tree is treated in Jungian psychology as a mother-symbol. Neeta is therefore seen "emerging, as it were, from the natural forces themselves...as an archetype". Similarly, the courtyard of the house, where the main actions of family life take place, is seen as an invocation of the Vedic *yagna-mandapa*, the site for Neeta's sacrifice.

Limitations: Rajadhyaksha makes it clear in his introduction that he does not seek to "judge" Ghatak. The result is an equal estimation of the value of all scenes in all the films. For instance, in *Subarnarekha*, the scene on the abandoned airstrip works magnificently, counterpointing the image of Kali with an image of modern technology and destruction. Another effective counterpoint is made in the night-club sequence in the same film where one of the characters recites verses from an Upanishad while drinking. But the scene of the beheading of the sister whom the drunken brother discovers in a brothel he visits seems awkward because of the way it is staged, concentrating on the violence itself more than on its effect on the others or its meaning.

In *Ajaantrik*, the mastery of the first 20 minutes is never recaptured, even within the high general level of the film; and despite all the explanations of the director himself and the commentators, the relationship of the tribal scenes with the rest is at best weak, present more in the mind of the film maker than on the screen. Such considerations are totally left out in the present book in its anxiety to find a continuous meaning, even where the meaning emerges sporadically because the expression is not uniformly successful.

Sensitive Mind: In fact it is a moot question whether Ghatak's alcoholic disintegration was due to outward difficulties or to inner conflicts of intellect and sensibility, cultural inheritance and conscious orientations, intuitive urges and theoretical approaches. It seems possible that he was drawn to the myths and archetypes because he felt himself bound by them: that he was trying to exorcise the bourgeois ghost in himself and did not succeed. In its inner recesses, did his highly moral and sensitive mind question his Tagorean inheritance and his bonds with the middle class (with which his films are so preoccupied) and bear a familiar Marxist sense of guilt on account of it? Some such explanation has to be found for his alcoholism which is known to psychologists as a *symptom* rather than a *cause* of disintegration.

Perhaps he would not have been so self-destructive if he had been able to identify with social classes other than his own, as his niece Mahashweta Devi was to do later in her stories and novels about working women and tribal heroes. Similarly, his passionate longing for the unity of the two Bengals hardly seems to have taken into account the

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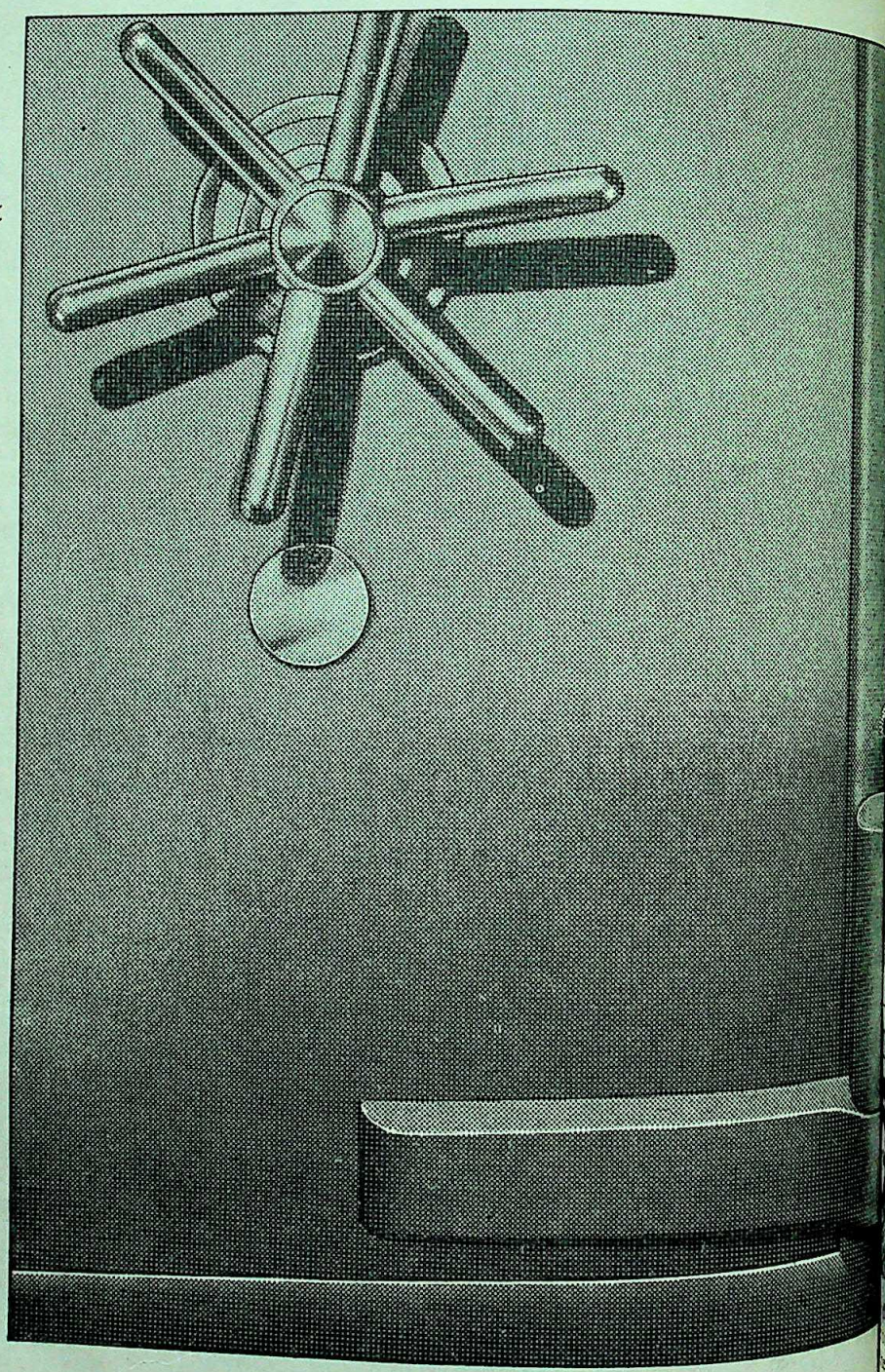

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nomic domination of the Hindu
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Ghatak was more like a Fellini
nstein (to both of whom Rajad-
ates him often in the book).
he bared his inner problems on
f the stage in his last film and
pse of his failure to exorcise the
him. It is the moral and aesthe-
which his inner battle was
the nobility of his failure, that
eat, and unique.

—CHIDANANDA DAS GUPTA

mons From Mount

AND PROBLEMS
A GANDHI
ions
25; Pages: 200

HOW DO you review a book that is not strictly a book? Mrs Gandhi has brought together in this volume more than two dozen of what she considers as her most important speeches from 1966, when she became prime minister, till the Cancun summit in 1981. All of delivered before august audiences in the United Nations in New e Sorbonne University in Paris; except one, which she gave to her seminar in New Delhi on foreign

peeches are all very solemn and thanlike; the kind of speeches s write for their bosses, not the kind of off-the-cuff stuff that Mrs Gandhi is so good at. Whoever is responsible for the book has timed it nicely for the coming non-aligned summit conference which will no doubt provide an occasion for much solemn oratory.

There are four main themes. The first is the crusade for the abolition of hunger and poverty, through development of resources by and for the benefit of the Third World. The second is environment and conservation of resources. Don't grab things, grow them, Mrs Gandhi says, for avarice is the ultimate curse of mankind. The third theme is science and technology on which, like her father, she is very good. She champions the cause of science which she regards as the key to the "new world" without, at the same time, making light of the dangers inherent in the introduction and use of new technologies. And the fourth is non-alignment on which too, like her father, she has developed a world-view that forms the core of the philosophy of non-alignment. Developing countries, she maintains, must not fall into the trap of becoming pawns in the power struggle between the superpowers and must stand at a safe distance and aloof from both of them.

Cautious World-view: The hectoring tone which Mrs Gandhi often adopts when addressing political audiences at home is mercifully absent here. She doesn't say, "Do this or else" but goes over every problem carefully, as a social or physical scientist might do, pointing out a peculiarity here, a flaw there, but always reminding her listeners that the world is a far more complex affair than it appears on the surface and there are always two if not more answers to every question.

It is all very well to stay clear of the superpowers, she seems to be saying, but you cannot really do that as the world is small and the superpowers are everywhere. You may succeed in creating a new world with the use of new technologies, but the advances you make will further widen, whether you like it or not, the gap between rich countries and poor, and even within the poor countries. There are pitfalls no matter what you do and where you go, for this is a small world and so fragile—and increasingly so—that it may come apart in our hands, unless we handle it carefully.

One wonders whether it might not be a good thing for Mrs Gandhi to sit back a little and look at problems nearer home as dispassionately as she surveys the world in this book and temper her political style accordingly. For India too is part of this world and is as fragile and brittle as any other country of the Third World for whom she speaks in this small but handy compilation.

—JAY DUBASHI

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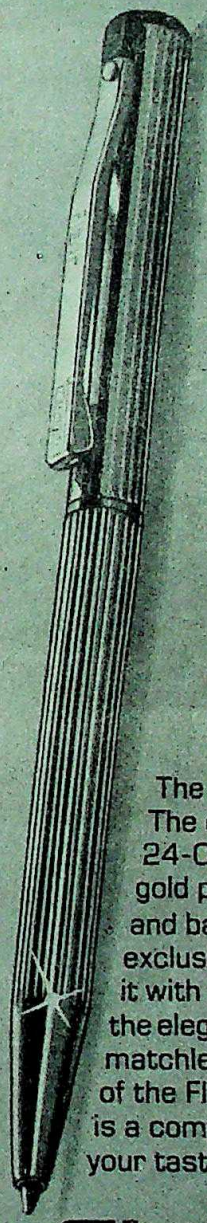

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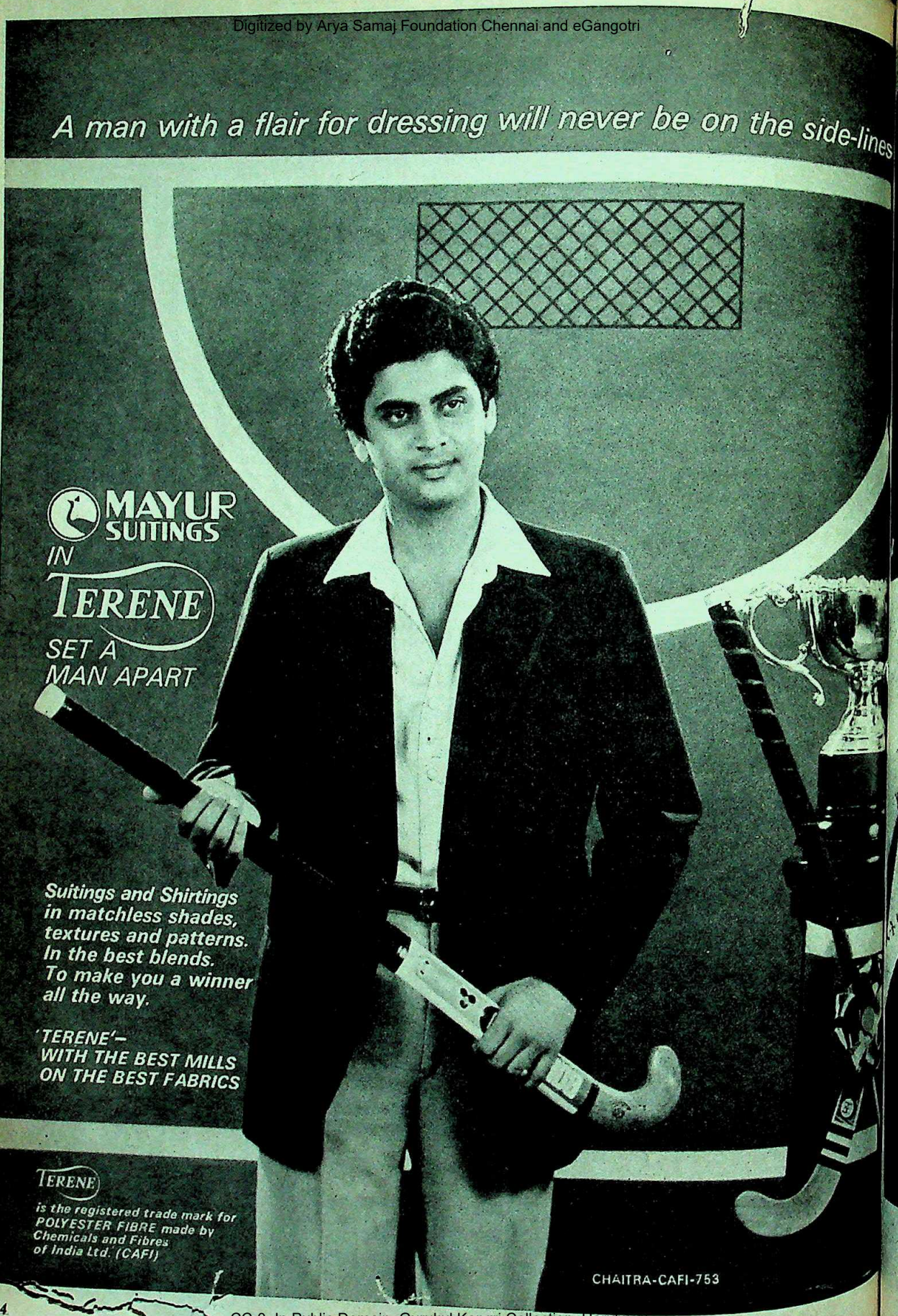

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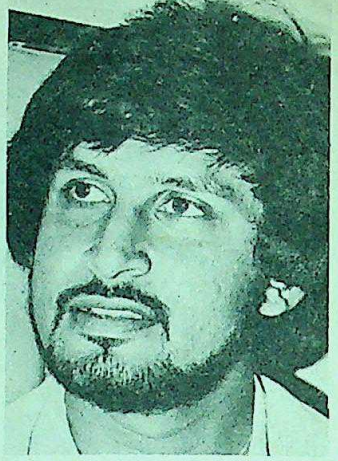
■ The blockbuster Attenborough film *Gandhi* seems to have proved a windfall for quite a few members of the cast apart from Sir Richard himself. The latest to hit the big time after Ben Kingsley is the man who played Jawaharlal Nehru in the film, **Roshan Seth**. Seth is earning rave reviews for his performance as Victor Mehta, a westernised Indian novelist, in *A Map of the World* currently drawing full houses at London's National Theatre. Seth, who plays the lead role in the play, was picked for the part over other established performers like Shashi Kapoor and Naseeruddin Shah and British drama critics have hailed his performance almost unanimously. This is the first time in the history of British theatre that an Indian has got the central role in a London play.

Seth in a scene from *A Map of The World*: rave reviews

For Seth, the recognition is a belated one. After graduating from the London Academy of Drama, he struggled along on the fringes of the theatre world without really making an impression. He finally left in 1977, because, as he says: "I was disappointed and disillusioned with my work. Things just didn't add up and the breaks never led anywhere." But five years later, the actor in him resurfaced and *Gandhi* was the result. As he says now: "There was no good reason for not going back to acting and so, here I am."

■ "It's not quite cricket," cried the chorus when Test star **Sandeep Patil** announced that he was unavailable for the coming tour of the West Indies. The tongues, last fortnight, began wagging even faster when close on the heels of Patil's announcement came the news that the handsome, well-built cricketer was making his debut in films opposite Poonam Dhillon in a movie called *Kabhi Ajnabi The* (I was once a stranger). Patil, of course, is hardly a stranger to the world of glamour. Shortly after his sporting career took off he cut a long-playing disco record which seems to have sunk without leaving much of a trace. But his foray into the film world has triggered off the rumour mills with accusations being made that he had refused the West Indies tour because of better financial pickings in moviedom.

Last week, Patil was forced to issue a denial that he had opted out of the tour because of the film contract. "I am prepared to go to the West Indies as a replacement for any batsman if I am invited," he said, adding that he would definitely be available for the World Cup to be held later this year in England. But after his non-availability in the West Indies, it is doubtful if he really has much of a choice. He had a pretty lean trot in the just-concluded Pakistan series and a thigh injury did not help matters either.

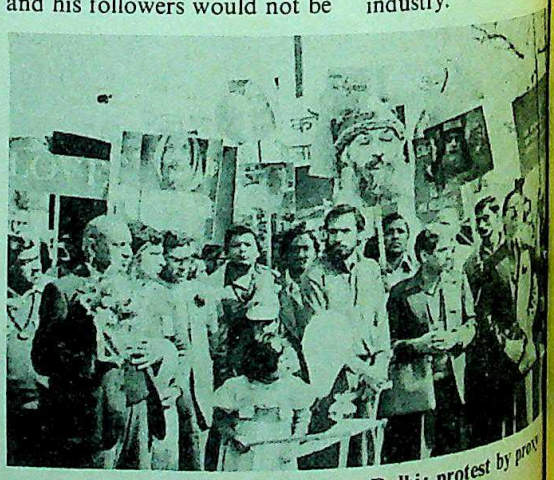


Patil: glamorous debut

At the moment he might find facing a camera easier than facing Malcolm Marshal or any of the other West Indian pacers.

■ Good Gurus never die. Neither do they fade away. Two years after he packed his bags and his Rolls Royces and sought greener pastures in the wilds of Oregon, USA, the self-styled **Bhagwan Rajneesh** was back in India, in spirit if not in flesh. Last fortnight, New Delhi once again witnessed the once-familiar saffron on its streets as 5,000 of the controversial guru's disciples marched through the streets to the US Embassy where they handed over a memorandum demanding that their "Bhagwan" be permitted to stay in the US and given a permanent visa.

The demonstration followed reports that the Bhagwan and his followers would not be given permanent domic[illegible] US following a series of [illegible]troversial events in the [illegible]ing new Rajneesh Ash[illegible] Oregon. Scoffed one [illegible] Delhi demonstrators: "[illegible]cision is inspired by [illegible] fear and religious prej[illegible]



Rajneesh followers in New Delhi: protest by prov[illegible]

SIGN POSTS

■ **Awarded:** The Fe[illegible] of Indian Chamber[illegible] Commerce and Indus[illegible]rds for 1982 to individ[illegible] companies for their o[illegible]ing contribution to var[illegible]lds of socio-economic d[illegible]ment, including science [illegible]chnology. Among the [illegible] winners are Blindmen[illegible]ciation, Ahmedabad, [illegible]tan Sugar Mills Ltd, [illegible]gokarannath, Walchand[illegible]tries Limited, Walchand[illegible] Dr R.N. Singh and [illegible] leagues, New Delhi a[illegible] P.N. Tandon, head of the [illegible] surgery department, AI[illegible]

■ **Appointed:** S.S. Va[illegible] the director-general of A[illegible] Radio. Varma was the d[illegible]ment commissioner of [illegible] scale industries in the [illegible] Ministry before taking o[illegible] post.

■ **Died:** Dr Atma R[illegible] the former director-ge[illegible] the Council of Scien[illegible] Industrial Research, [illegible] Delhi. The most im[illegible] achievement in Dr Ram[illegible] that spanned five deca[illegible] the development of the [illegible] for the manufacture of [illegible] glass, one of the prized [illegible] materials for defence [illegible] industry.

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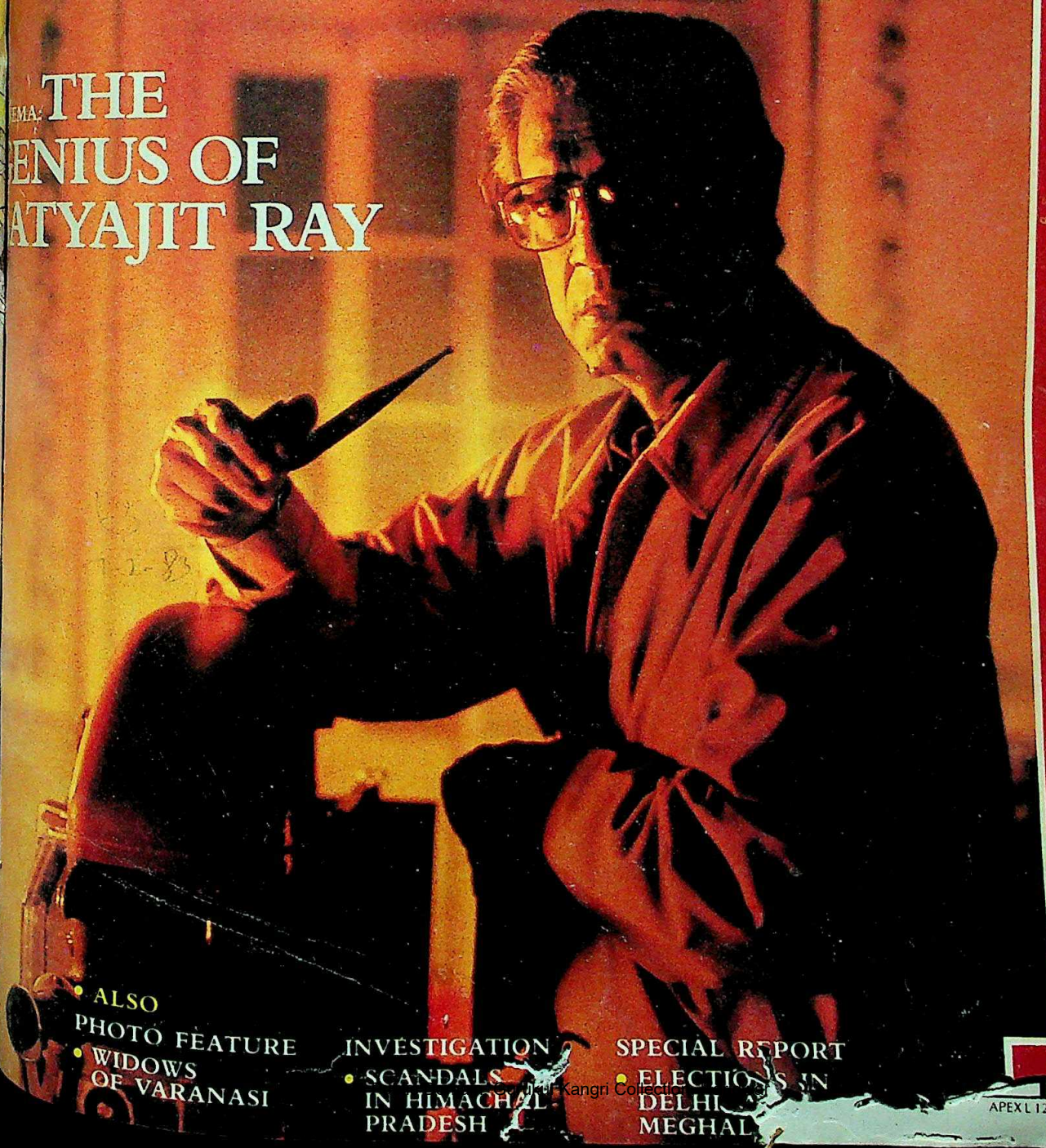

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FEBRUARY 15, 1983

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

NEWS doesn't always scream out of the headlines. It is, more frequently than not, where you look for it. And, there is little doubt that people at the top of their professions are newsworthy whether or not they are on the front pages—people who have a touch of genius, or who have scaled the heights against odds to achieve excellence, people who have made a mark in their particular activity by any standard world-wide, or those whose work is an inspiration to others. Thus, over the years INDIA TODAY *has featured outstanding achievers on its covers, not because of anything they had done at that particular time but because they are worthy of attention any time. Most recently have appeared Lata Mangeshkar (February 1–15, 1981), Amitabh Bachchan (May 1–15, 1980), Sunil Gavaskar (September 16–30. 1979) and M.F. Husain (February 1–15, 1979)—individuals who cannot strictly be compared but who, in their own fields, have reached the top.*

It is in keeping with this practice that INDIA TODAY *features Satyajit Ray on its cover this fortnight. Ray is a personality who compels attention. Seldom out of the news at any time—whether it is because of the awards he gets, or the films he is making—Ray was for a long time difficult to pin down for prolonged interviews and active picture sessions. Over two sessions, one in December and one last fortnight on the sets of his newest film,* Ghare Baire, *Ray spoke at length with Correspondent* SUMIT MITRA, *a long-time Ray acolyte and film fanatic. Picture Editor* RAGHU RAI *too spent two picture sessions with Ray, the first in and around the director's home in Calcutta and the second on the sets of* Ghare Baire. *It was during the second session that Rai shot the cover: the scene being filmed required the simulation of candle-light and the artificial lighting Ray used provided the evocative orange tint that colours Rai's picture.*

As it happened, the feature was put together as the curtain was rung down on the 9th Film Festival in the capital's Vigyan Bhavan. The festival was decidedly not the greatest show on earth, but it had redeeming features, chiefly in exhibiting the work of a crop of upcoming Indian directors whose work is narrowing the difference between commercial and art cinema. After sitting through the screening of several hours of films, Correspondent SUNIL SETHI *picked five for a special feature on the new cinema which will, perhaps, spawn the Satyajit Rays of the future. In spite of the turgid, formula films reeling endlessly out of the country's studios, it is obvious that in a vibrant corner of the industry there is a strong, viable and growing cinema form that is charting new directions.*

WITH the political scene showing definite signs of hotting up, the coming state elections in Assam, Meghalaya and the civic elections in Delhi are of more than usual interest. Calcutta Correspondent SUMANTA SEN *who toured Assam came away with some bizarre impressions of the pre-poll scenario in that riot-hit state, while Correspondent* COOMI KAPOOR, *who joined* INDIA TODAY *last month, found that the Delhi poll has become a prestige issue indicating that there is far more at stake than mere municipal control. For the ruling party at least, the results of the election could prove crucial in the context of the recent debacle in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.*

Arun Purie

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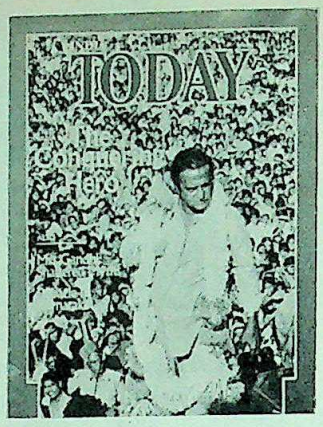

NEARING THE END?

The cover story "The Crash Of '83" (January 31) chronicles the beginning of the end for the Congress(I). At last Mrs Gandhi's party's performance has been tried against the touchstone of her promises and the electorate has seen through the rhetoric. And with the emergence of the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh a gap has been filled—there is a viable alternative now.

Bulsar *M. Raju Naidu*

■ I don't understand how everyone is going on about the invincibility the Congress(I) is supposed to have enjoyed in the south. The real Congress died in 1969 and it would be better if the offshoots did some quiet introspection instead of planning a centenary in 1985.

Bangalore *P. Rama Raju*

■ At last a politician who can outcharisma Mrs Gandhi!

Sirsi *Dr G.N. Sharma*

■ In neither Andhra Pradesh nor Karnataka can the defeat of the Congress(I) be interpreted as a rejection of Mrs Gandhi. The electorate of both states were disgusted with their inefficient administrations, not with the prime minister

Madras *K.V. Rajagopalan*

■ It has been mentioned that the number of seats in Bangalore is 15. The number is 12.

Bangalore *A.V. Manjunatha*

■ The article alleged that the Janata-Ranga is at the mercy of the BJP. The BJP has given the combine its unconditional support unlike the communist parties who laid down the condition that the BJP should not have a seat in the Cabinet.

New Delhi *Ranita Ray*

BLEAK TALES

The January 31 issue was a sad mentary on this country. For the 2 lion millworkers who have been on for the last year ("The Wages Of W there seems to be no way out. From turned to the people who worked h day and did not have a roof o heads in the cold winter nights ("I Cold Of The Night"). As if this w enough I went on to read about robbed of their eyesight by an unscru quack in "A Trail Of Darkness".

Patna *Sanj*

TASTELESS FARE

In his interview "I Compromised" (January 31) Khu Singh has tried to belittle the about the late Baburao Patel These clarifications are even wo ste apart from the fact that they w true. In the correspondence he "roar with laughter" and was symp I am sure he could not have said glad to know the old man (Sir Sri had a glad eye." No one can object to man having a glad eye but in this refers to the wife of a dear and re friend. Surely our tradition cannot o these crude jokes.

Bombay *Sushila Rani Baburao*

FALSE NOTE

In "Indianotes" (January Barabanki and Minister of State Ram Das have been awarded to While Jagannath Mishra is wel Das, I protest the transfer of Ba from Uttar Pradesh.

New Delhi *Am*

EXPLODED MYTH

The recent Assembly electio Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and ("A Battle Royal", January 15) ploded the myth that there is no native to the Congress(I). Democ alive in this country beyond the money—and computers. *K.*

Madras

■ The cover story was a fine exa desk journalism. After reading the not to speak of living through th paigns, I could not believe that I respondents toured Andhra Pra was easily the biggest blunder of the *Dr*

Guntur

■ Mrs Gandhi has only her cr tymen to blame for this defeat. ssive politicking within the party fact is that in both states, they w busy hanging on to office than a

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in both states the electorate had

Tridib Neogi

ing the articles was like going the clinical report after reading postmortem.

Dr S.N. Dhananjay

the article it is stated that there Muslim judge in the Andhra High Court. There are and their Justice Muktadar and Justice Khan.

Y. Chandra Sekhar

Gandhi must be given credit for democracy to function in this

Dinesh Maryeshwar

G THE MARK

ards A Bruised Win" (January that no prediction can be made g to just a few people at ran- think it would be best if INDIA sted from such an activity.

Jayathirtha K. Pujar

should demand the return of payment was made to the who conducted this poll.

S.R.P. Murthy

copy of the magazine with the tions reached me five days after were announced. Why don't me the magazine India

S. Sivadas

ally one would have felt sorry if went so completely wrong. case of the Andhra Pradesh poll only feel happy.

G. Parthsarthy

toured Andhra Pradesh as ea- ember 20 it was evident that the gam was on a winning streak. the experts were not able to see

M. Satya Sudheer

predictions were a 100 per cent But I guess that's better than ance of our politicians in the the promises they make which per cent off.

Sudhir Malhotra

TURNED

ference to NTR as the joker in a Pradesh pack ("Letter From January 15) is ironic in retrospect. Now who is the joker and who is the ace?

New Delhi *K.R. Chandrar*

CRIPPLING LAWS

The detailed special report on child labour in Sivakasi ("Exploiting the Young", January 15) shocked and pained me. The article makes me realise how crippled our laws are in this country and how inhuman we have become.

Tiruchy *R. Kanakaraj*

■ In the England of Charles Dickens where cruel conditions for workers were as prevalent as in India today, public opinion could be mobilised to change the system. When will this be possible in this country?

Bangalore *A. Brito*

■ Isn't it strange that the Government that can spare Rs 100 crore for a midday meal scheme for schoolchildren cannot save children from being ruthlessly exploited at Sivakasi's fireworks factories?

Madras *V. Bhat*

A DOUBLE BONUS

"Future Shock" (January 15) was a double bonus. Not only did the text keep me in splits but the cartoons too were hilarious. And what was the best was that the satire had nothing malicious, petty or mean.

Ahmednagar *J. Banerji*

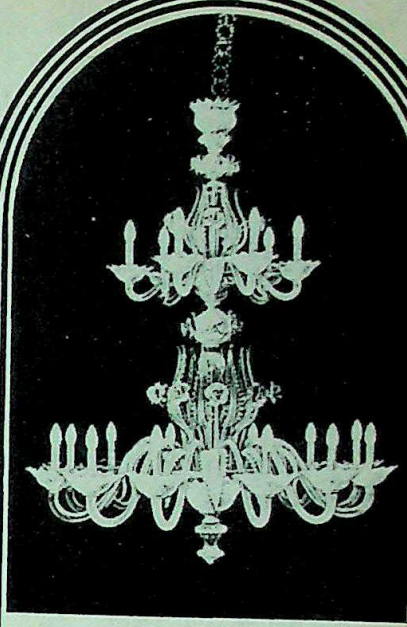
HIT AND MISS

"Signs Of The Times" (January 15) encapsulated the year's events extremely well. It was the clearest and most comprehensive year-end review that I have read.

Shahjanpur *Rajeev Chandra Seth*

■ Yet again INDIA TODAY ignored the death of Acharya Vinoba Bhave. While there was enough room for Malkhan Singh, the Maruti-Suzuki tie-up and Maneka Gandhi, this great Gandhian was not even mentioned.

Kota *Shashi Pareek*



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Litolier lights up lovelier nights

APEX L 1282

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■ I notice that INDIA TODAY always prefixes Indira Gandhi's name with a respectful Mrs. This really stood out when a picture was captioned "Thatcher with Mrs Gandhi . . . ." What is this—awe, bias or sycophancy?

Bombay *D. Nayar*

Courtesy—and clarity to distinguish her from another, more illustrious Gandhi.

—Editor

HARMFUL COCKTAIL

The article "Spurious Spray" (January 15) underlines the fact that the crops of the green revolution are more susceptible to pest attacks. To make matters worse the farmers are using cocktails (a mix of different pesticides) and the effect is unpredictable and often harmful. And indiscriminate aerial spraying has affected all living things.

Sonepat *Anurag*

■ This phenomenon is not restricted to Punjab alone. In Tamil Nadu too, there were instances of the use of spurious insecticides. Also Furadan is not a spray but a granular insecticide applied to the soil

Coimbatore. *S.J. Lodge*

EXPERT COMMENTS

Bishen Singh Bedi's article on the Indo-Pakistani cricket match ("Lahore's Lessons", January 15) was worth reading. Now that the team has done so badly I hope the authorities will make the necessary changes.

Jamshedpur *Pradeep Banevar*

■ I thought that Bedi would bring his own bias to the assessment of the performance of both teams. But after reading the article I realised that he has done an excellent job.

Rajkot *D.P. Bhatt*

■ The post-mortem missed out a very important reason for our defeat—how can a team with 11 players compete against one which if one counts the two umpires has 13?

Calcutta *Aditya Himatsingka*

TEMPLES OF TERROR

The whole trouble with Patna University ("Criminals On Campus", January 15) is that it is being used as a nursery for future politicians. And these hopefuls are made in the same rowdy mould as our politicians.

Bangalore *Sridhar*

■ Today universities around the country, not Patna alone, are suffering because of increased politicisation. They are no longer temples of learning, but seats of vandalism and goondaism.

Surat *Manisha S. Chande*

DILUTED PLEASURE

Reading "A Taxing Puff" (January 15) made it clear that the statutory warning on cigarette packets should be changed to "cigarette smoking is injurious to wealth".

Gurgaon *Manoj Chadha*

THEIR RIGHTFUL SHARE

The demands of the Nair Service Society (NSS) are very valid ("Communal Clout", January 15). In Kerala the Nairs are not eligible for any aid as they are high caste Hindus. But a poor Nair like me cannot continue with my education. What the NSS is trying to do is extend benefits to all poor people.

Bolangir *K.K. Nair*

■ In the article it is mentioned that all the chief ministers of Kerala with the exception of three were Nairs. There are four exceptions.

Ahmedabad *George Joseph*

BABY BOOM

"The Baby Business" (January 15) is none of our business. As long as couples in Western Europe want Indian babies we should be thankful. The only option the babies have is starving to death in the country of their birth.

Ludhiana *Rajeev K. Varma*

MUSICAL CHAIRS

In "A Rare Encounter" (January 15) it was explained that the stampede at the Shankar Lal Auditorium during the *jugalbandi* between Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan was because twice as many people as the auditorium could seat were trying to squeeze in. I was there that night and I know that the reason for the stampede was that the organisers had sold too many tickets. The attitude of the organisers is one more thing that convinces me that the best things about India can only be heard outside the country.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil *K.K. Chawla*

GUILTY CONSCIENCE

I was shocked to find that the issue carrying an article on the NCCF ("Dubious Dealings", December 31) was taken off the stands by the men of Chairman Tapeshwar Singh. This is the third time that a journal has been prevented from reaching the people of Bihar—a most reprehensible act.

Arrah *Ayaz Parwez*

AUTHENTIC IMAGE

Receiving the INDIA International Edition is like coming every fortnight. And the article "C Checkers" (December 31) was one best I have read. I fully agree w article that South Block should c China's expansionist moves.

Hong Kong *S.K. P*

ACCUSING FINGER

It appears that this magazine upon presenting only the negative of Gujarat. No matter what sub written on, the treatment is always gatory. There is a lot more to Guja

Ranchi *P.K.*

NOT GOING DUTCH!

The item 'Dutch Censure' Air', November 15) gave an errone ture of Dutch policy towards In me first stress that protection of rights is a central element of Net foreign policy. Therefore develop this field world-wide are followed wherever possible by the Net authorities. With regard to the mentioned in the item which sugg the Netherlands has taken econom sures against India because country's human rights record, like to make the following points.

The Netherlands does not curtail in any way trade with India contrary, the Netherlands aims pansion of all relations with India ing economic and commercial Netherlands Parliament did not p solution criticising India's human records. The Netherlands author not prohibit the sale of fishing tr India; on the contrary, negotiat being held for the purchase of tra Indian buyers on commercial Finally there is no bill pending Netherlands Parliament which banning fertiliser sales to India contrary, negotiations are being c on deliveries of fertilisers, part will be financed by a grant of the lands Government. H

New Delhi Ambassador of the Ne

Popular pressure did oblige Government to stop the supply trawlers under development though commercial sales are still The resolution criticising India's ghts record was not passed in Parli true, but was signed by Parliament from seven parti Netherlands.

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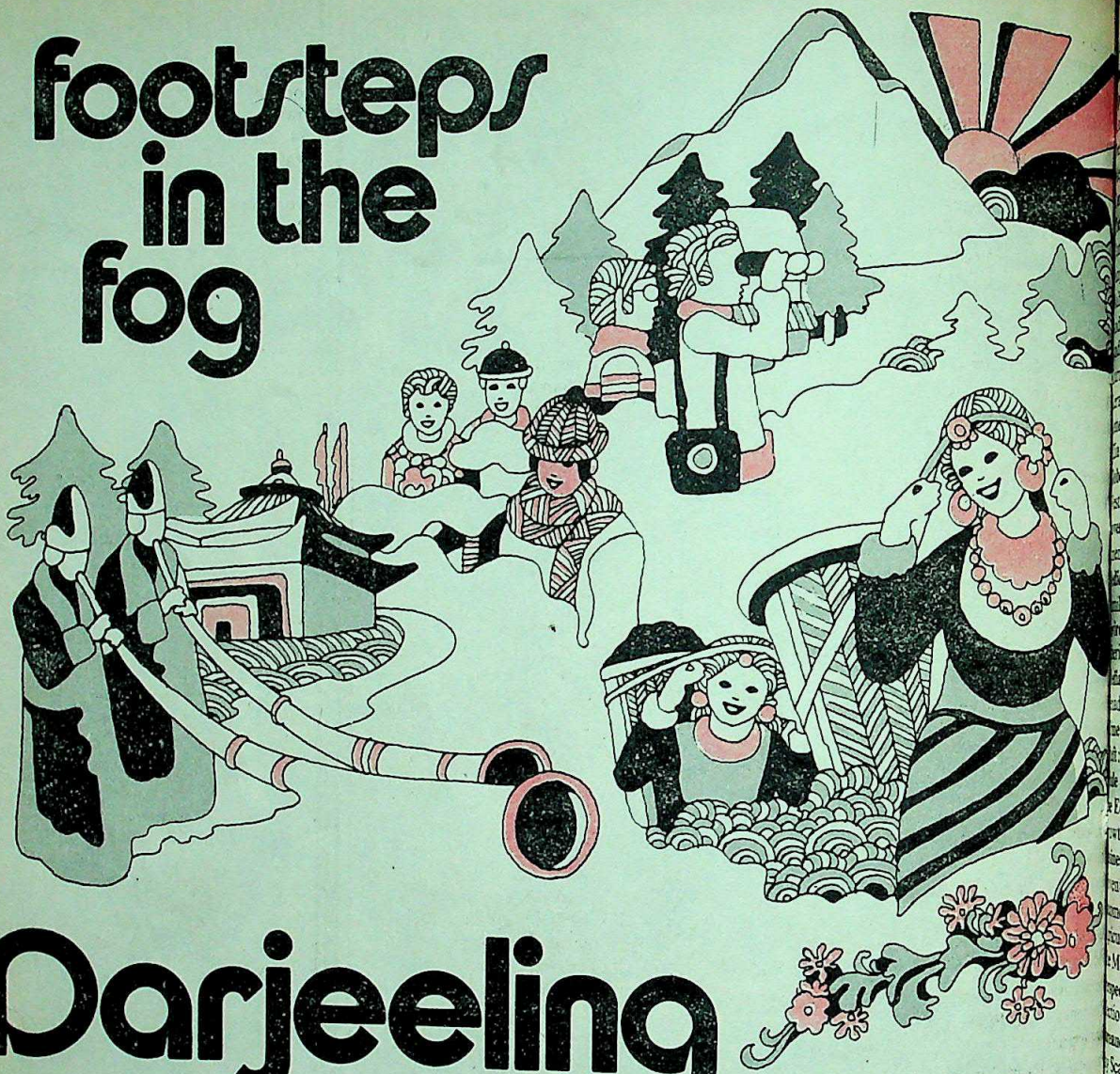
footsteps in the fog



Darjeeling

There are so many ways you could holiday at Darjeeling.

For plain sightseeing—there's the Himalayan panorama—unmatched elsewhere in India. Kanchenjungha (8,444 metres high), Siniolchu (6,780 metres), Janu (7,590 metres) and Kabru (7,205 metres). The Llyod Botanical Gardens of exotic flora. Museums & Art Galleries. Observatory Hill. Dhirdham temple. Himalayan Mountaineering Institute. Crisp cold sunrises atop Tiger Hill. And colourful hospitable hill-folk with their festivities and handicrafts and fairs.

For short pleasure trips—trek to Sandakphu; Ghoom (6 kms.) known for its Buddhist monastery; Kurseong (32 kms.) with its Eagle's Crag view of the plains; Kalimpong (51 kms.); Takda (26 kms.), land of the white orchid; Mirik, the latest hill-resort coming up; and Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary. (224 kms.)

Darjeeling is about 700 Kilometres from Calcutta. You can fly too upto Bagdogra in only 45 minutes. Then a 80 km. drive through terraced tea gardens and virgin forests.

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Tourism, West Bengal

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IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

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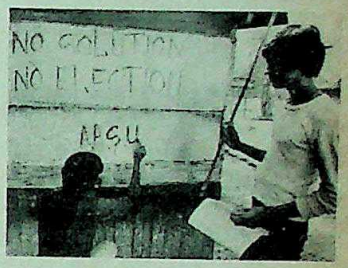
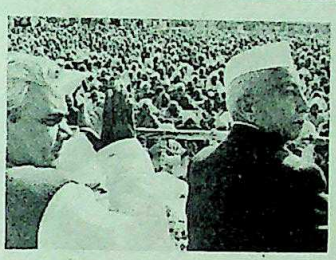
COVER STORY: He might not be as well-known in the far flung areas of India as Amitabh Bachchan is. But Satyajit Ray, 62, looms larger than his 6 ft 4½ inches imposing frame, in the international film scene. With 24 feature films and six shorts in the cans, Ray has come a long way since the release of his first film, *Pather Panchali*. Now working on his latest film *Ghare Baire*, Ray's success has remained unmatched by any other film maker. **Page 68**

SPECIAL REPORT: With the resounding defeat of the ruling party in the recent state elections in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, more than usual interest has been aroused in the coming state elections in riot-torn Assam and Meghalaya and civic elections in Delhi. The ruling party desperately needs to make a good showing in order to restore some of its lost prestige but that could prove difficult. **Page 20**





CURRENT EVENTS: Despite the decisive rejection of the ruling party in the south, the fragmented Opposition is refusing to see the writing on the wall. Instead of burying their differences, they continue to fight each other. An analysis of the opposition politics with profiles of the men at its helm. **Page 29**

CINEMA: In an otherwise jaded Panorama section of the just concluded Ninth International Film Festival, there were a few films that have been positive pointers to the promotion of serious Indian cinema. As different in idea and concept as they are from the background of their directors, the appearance of the films however, has signalled a new mood on the part of the directors. **Page 120**

INVESTIGATION: A series of High Court judgements in Himachal Pradesh has sent tremors through the Congress(I). The judgements have exposed the wanton violations of rules by the relations and friends of Chief Minister Thakur Ram Lal. An on-the-spot investigative report on the goings on in Himachal Pradesh. **Page 126**

PHOTO FEATURE: Victims of the strict dictates of the Hindu code, thousands of widows from all over India congregate in Varanasi to spend the rest of their lives depending on the charity of others. Most of them have been left to their fate by their children or in-laws to suffer in the dirt and the grime of the streets on which they live. Although the Government has initiated a pension scheme for the widows, most of them complain that corrupt officials barely help to get them the money. A report with haunting pictures. **Page 146**

OTOGRAPH BY RAGHU RAI

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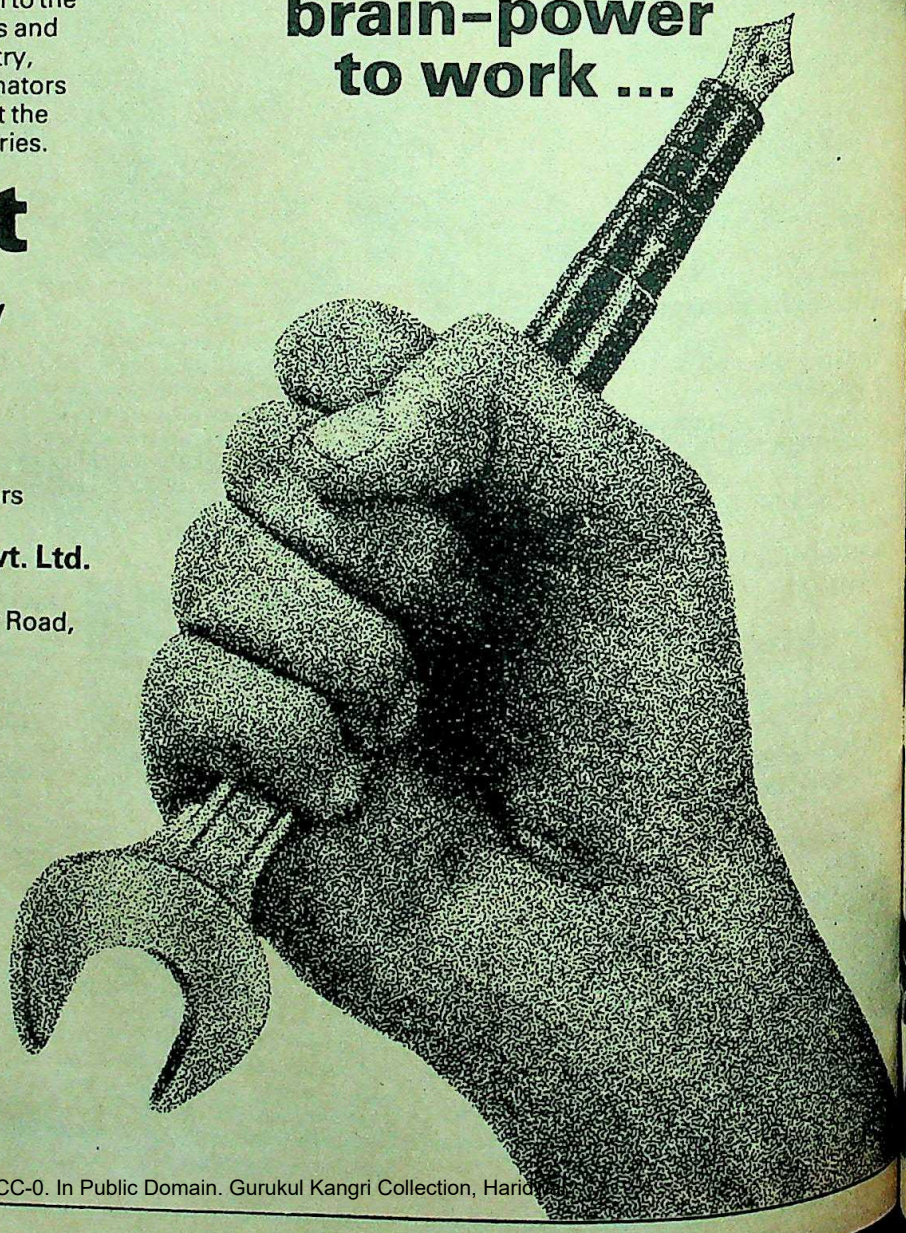

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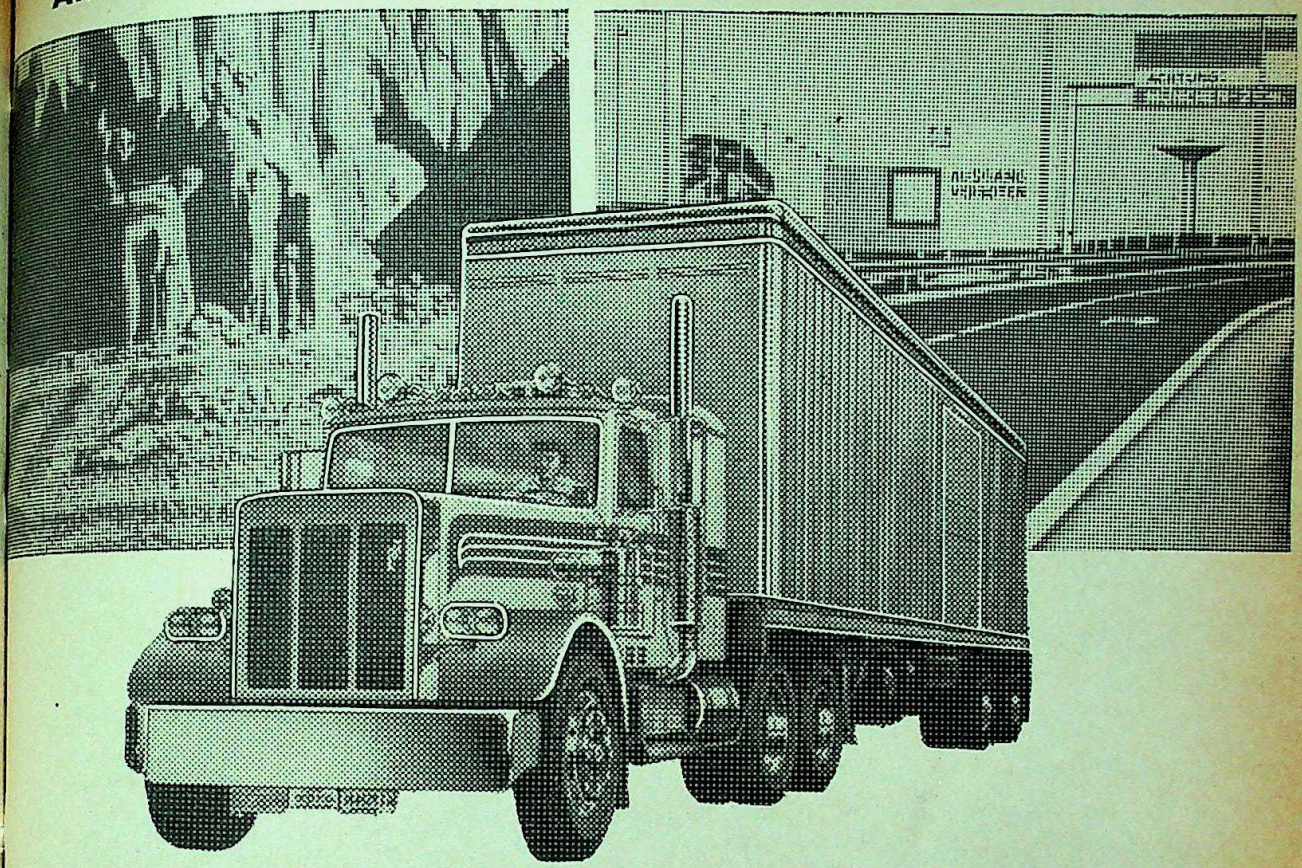

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» I can tell you that a character like Amteshwar and a chit of a g
Maneka or a little urchin of a Dumpy should become heroes in our co
They (the press) were calling them Sanjay's goons; Sanjay's goons hav
become heroes.

—*Mohammed Yunus in* S

» (N.T.) Rama Rao is a "creature" of the evils of Congress(I) rule and th
surge caused by the discontent among the people. Though he successfully d
Indira Gandhi, he is no Pulakesin II to carry his forces to the north.

—*Quark in the* Sunday R

» Politicians are the greatest liars and thieves, and the day they are rem
from the scene, India will become truly free.

—*Dr Farooq Abdullah at a science forum in Char*

» Even the Union Cabinet...is not a model of integrity and efficiency. So
the ministers would be a disgrace to a well-run municipality.

—*Girilal Jain in* The Times of

» How Mrs Gandhi came to form the Congress(I) over the dead bodies o
inert opponents is a different story. There is now no other Congress. In fact
the Congress in Congress(I) is moribund. It is the (I) alone that remains.

—*M.V. Kamath in* Su

» If Muslims who stayed behind in India after partition feel persecuted in I
they have the choice to go to their Islamic heaven in Pakistan. They ca
have the cake and eat it too.

—*Balraj Madhok in* The Illustrated Weekly of India

» I can tell you with all the emphasis at my command that I am not interested in politics. I never was, I never will be.

—*Amitabh Bachchan in* Screen

» The communist movement, comprising much of the salt of our earth, lives from demonstration to demonstration, (and) gets tangled in the parliamentary web of phrase-making and procrastination and failure.

—*Professor Hiren Mukherjee in* The State

» Mrs Gandhi is keen on telling the workers of this country that in her bo
the moment, production is of paramount importance and wage claims must
second place; the worker is less important than the work.

—*Editorial comment in* The Tele

» If there are Congress(I) governments there (Haryana and Himachal Pra
today, it is not because of the support of the people, it is because of
manipulation and corruption, because of the immoral methods adopted to
government.

—*Ramakrishna Hegde in* The Sunday Obs

» Shashi Kapoor is too safe a player...He's not interested in socially rele
cinema. He's too influenced by the Hollywood style of film making and its bo

—*M.S. Sathyu in* Weekend Re

» I'm an Indian in heart, body and soul. I've still the Indian passport. I've
problems nor the paranoia about it.

—*Zubin Mehta in* So

» I noticed that young people were greatly impressed by Attenborough's
(*Gandhi*). The old are incorrigible. Given the chance, they will assassinate
again.

—*K.R. Sunder Rajan in* Deb

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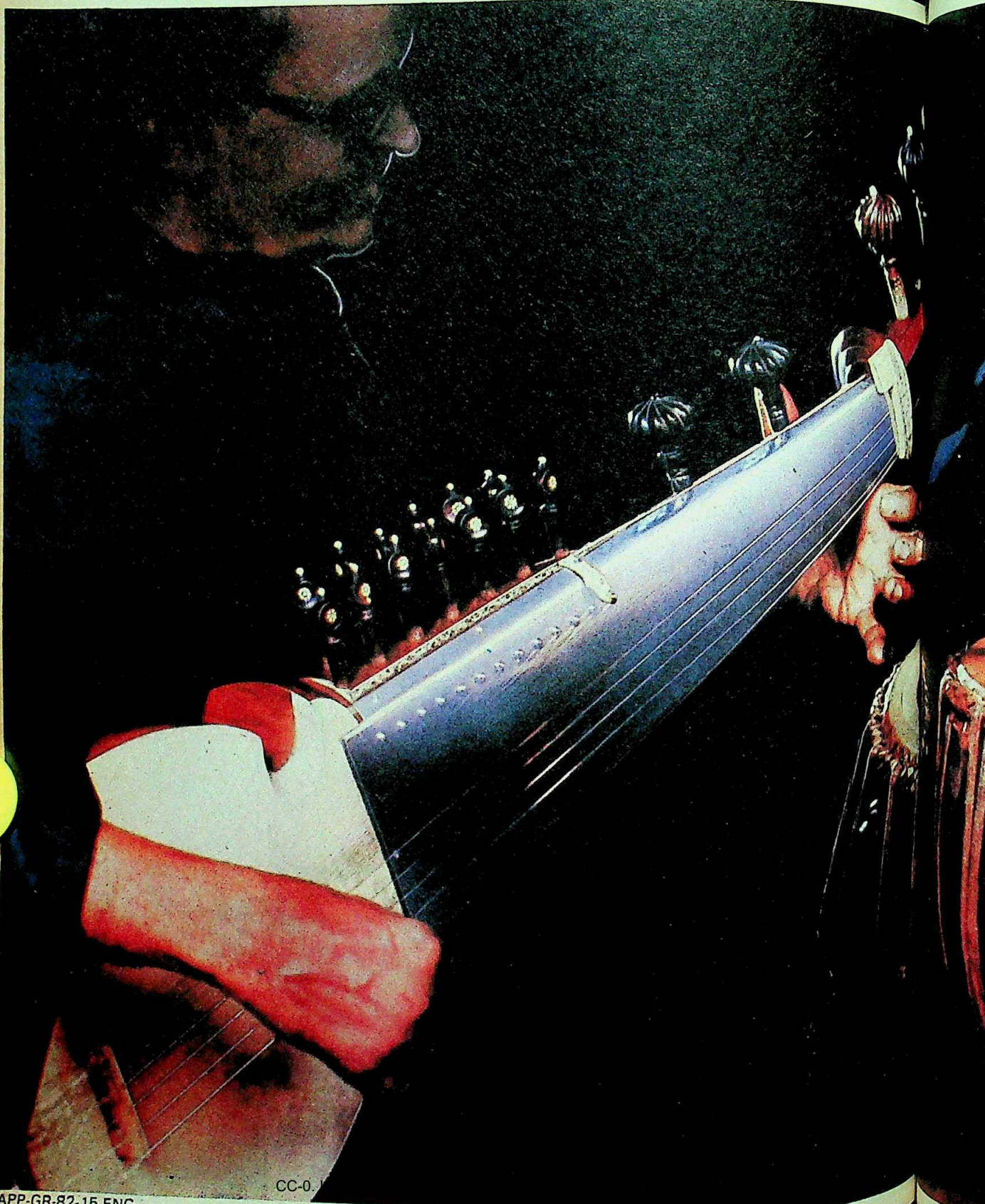

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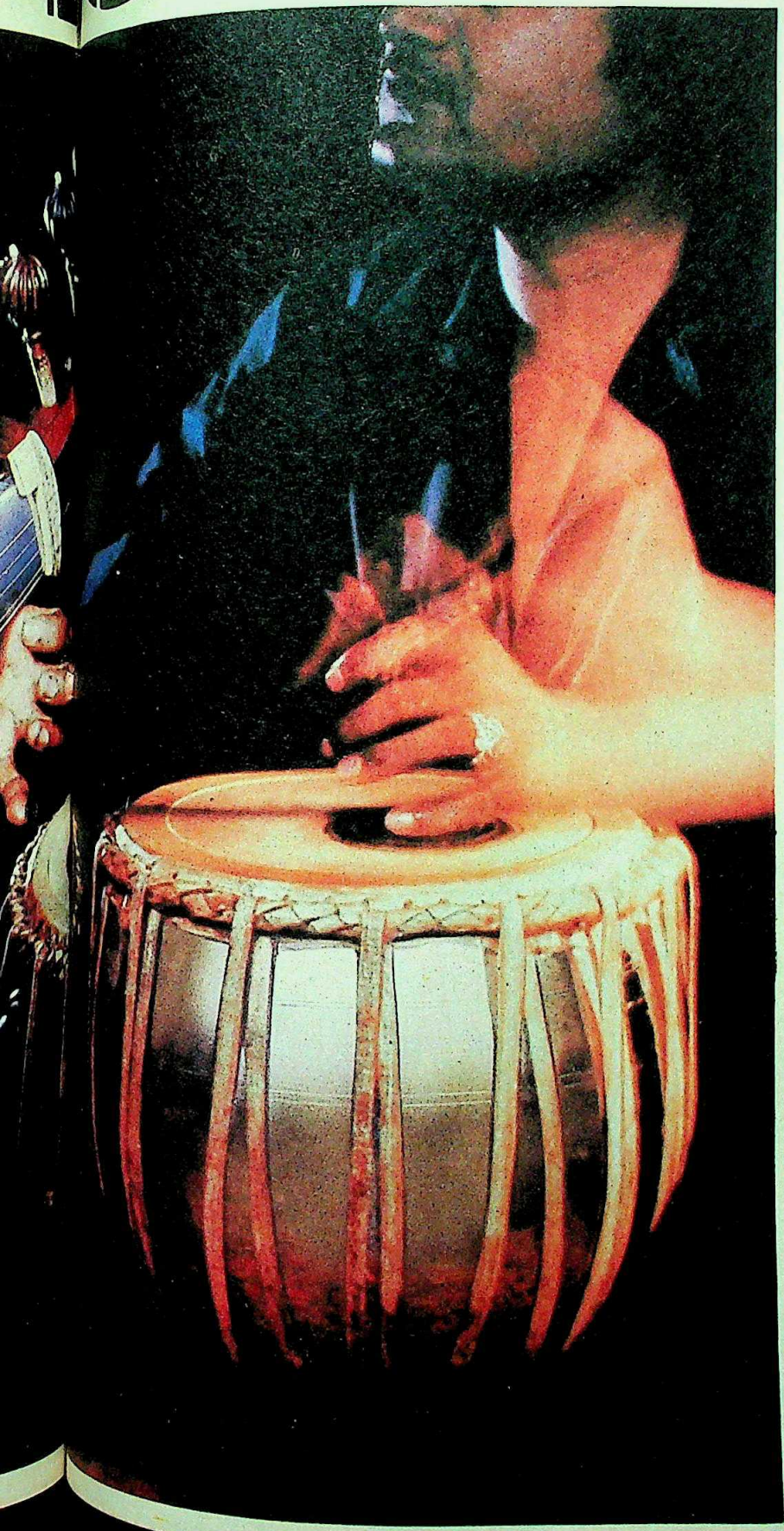

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It was Tuesday. We had one argument after the other.
The heat never really wore off. Red it was.
Pent-up, spit-fire angry young man vengeful-red.
It took her by storm like
I wanted it to.

KOHINOOR
fiesta
And no
two mo
will ever
be the s

Red Blue Green Violet
Colour Condoms in one

(S) LRE 2 i 82

A Product

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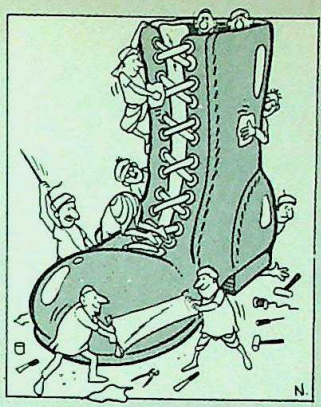
KING TALL

These boots are not for walking. Each wei- 90 kg, is 252.5 cm high 75 cm long, and with vital statistics it is un- that they would fit any in a shoe store. One is throned at a factory in abad, Haryana, and the lords it at a shoe factory Calcutta as a rather large of the management's appreciation of the workers.

The person who had the bright idea of ordering these seven-league boots was none other than the great T.N. Bata. The story begins in Agra, where 72 firms received detailed specifications for the shoes. Of the firms, 71 declined the challenge. The 72nd was more enterprising and appointed a four-member committee to shape the shoe. Sixteen cobblers cut and sewed and hammered for an entire month. The shoe consumed material enough for 70 normal ones. The lace is more than 10 m long and passes quite easily through 27 eyelets made by a local brass manufacturer.



The Agra firm is now working on a third giant shoe. Next stop, the *Guinness Book of Records*—the champion there is only 135 cm tall and weighs only 28.1 kg.

OVEL PROTEST

The age-old quarrel be- man and wife spilled into the streets of tsar, Punjab, last month, most unusual manner. A keeper of the Putlighar and his lady had not been best of terms for quite time and the first inkling fellow shopkeepers had rift in the lute was when wife turned up one morning at her husband's shop —and sat down before it in a one-woman dharna.

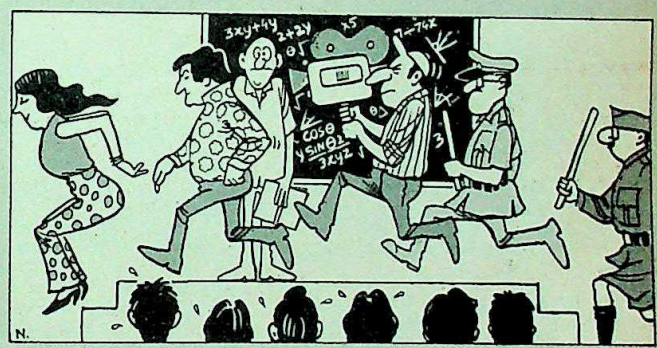
Raising her voice in a plaintive chant, she asked her husband, staring goggle-eyed over the scales, to give her more money for running the household. As passers-by urged her on to greater heights, she launched into a chest-beating tirade against her man, saying that he was a good-for-nothing who was only interested in drinks and such like. He was not slow to react, saying that she was a thriftless housewife who thought money grew on trees.

Eventually, however, other shopkeepers rallied around and persuaded the woman to get up and make up with her lord and provider. Still grumbling, she very reluctantly lifted herself off the asphalt, and the couple vanished into the shop.

MPUS CAPERS

Incredible as it may seem, are people in Bombay do not like films. They post-graduate students at Kalina campus in north- Bombay and they have an a passionate letter ex- their irritation to Joshi, vice-chancellor, bay University.

As the students tell it, the bay film industry has in- their "sacred" haunt in form of the shooting unit the film *Ek Jaan Hain Hum*, starring Raj Kapoor's son Chimpu, which is probably one of those thrilling stories of teenage love where middle-aged hero and heroine contract cancer from a dosa in the canteen and die to the tune of a hundred guitars. The students say hundred guitars be damned, we can't even move about on the campus with all these policemen around, and added that the "campus cannot be sold for a song".

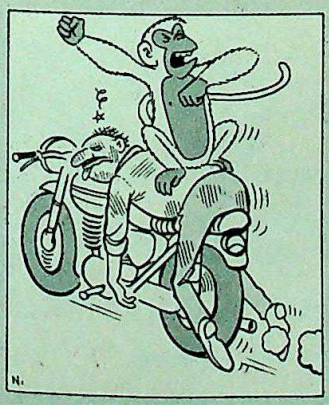


What is more, they have threatened to go on a hunger strike if their demands to have the shooting unit withdrawn are not met. Meanwhile, work on the campus has almost stopped, what with the hero and heroine cavorting in the classes and cops chasing curious students away to the rallying cry of "Cut! Cut!"

URNING MONKEY

It was a scene from a in Manmad, near last month, set, appropriately, in a hair-cutting sa- In the depth of night, a of policemen waited, at strategic intervals the saloon. Hundreds people watched from a safe ance. The town held its

The whole thing had begun a week earlier when a motorcycle had run down the monkey's mate. That drove the monkey wild and for seven days it went around clobbering everybody in sight, injuring at least 15 people and driving nearly the entire population into their houses whenever its black-faced figure hove into sight.



Motorcycles were the special target of its fury: whenever it saw one, it would do an imitation of Tarzan of the Apes, and launch itself like a guided missile on the unfortunate rider. Only a few brave souls dared to venture out.

But the animal was finally trapped in the saloon and lured into a stout iron cage outside. The sub-inspector who led the police team wiped his brow and said that the monkey would be handed over to a zoo.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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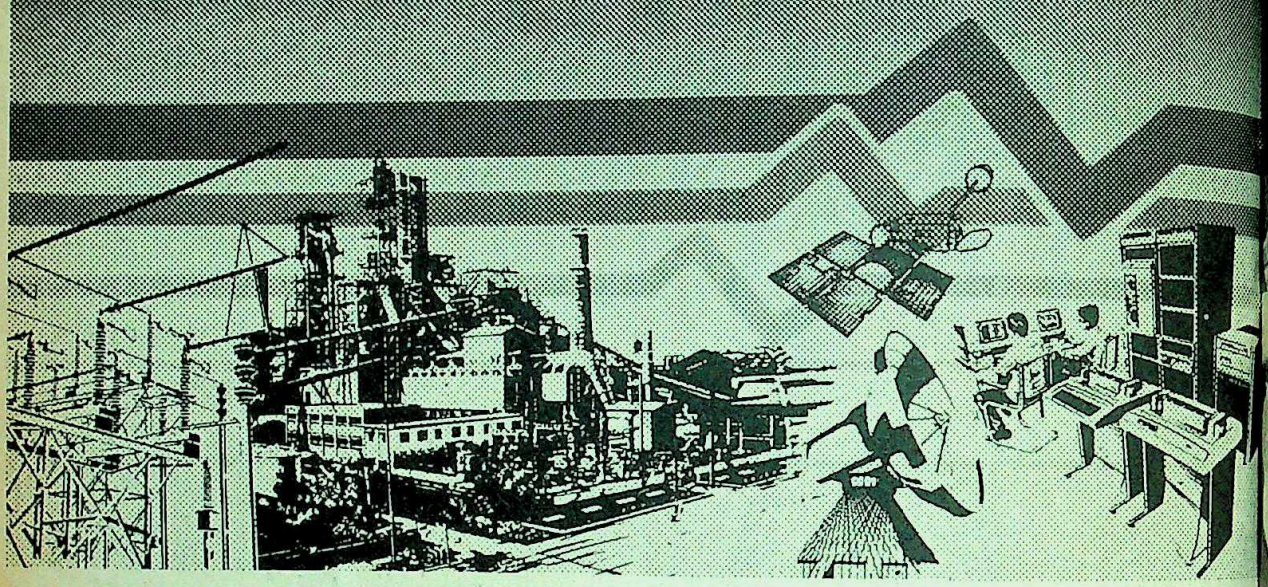

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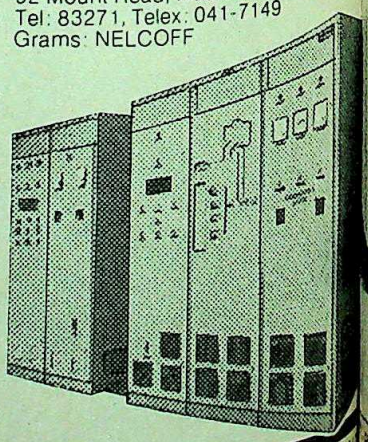

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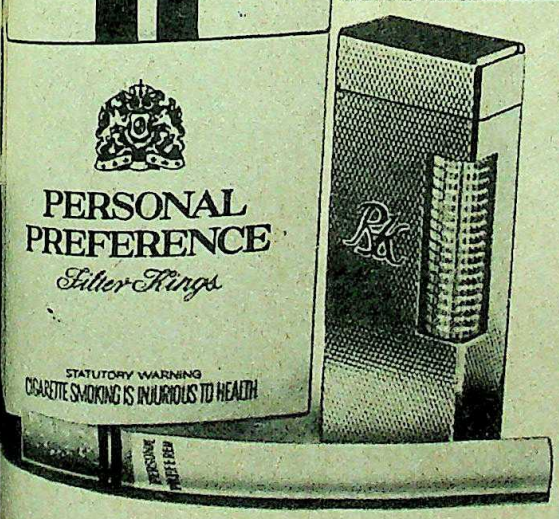

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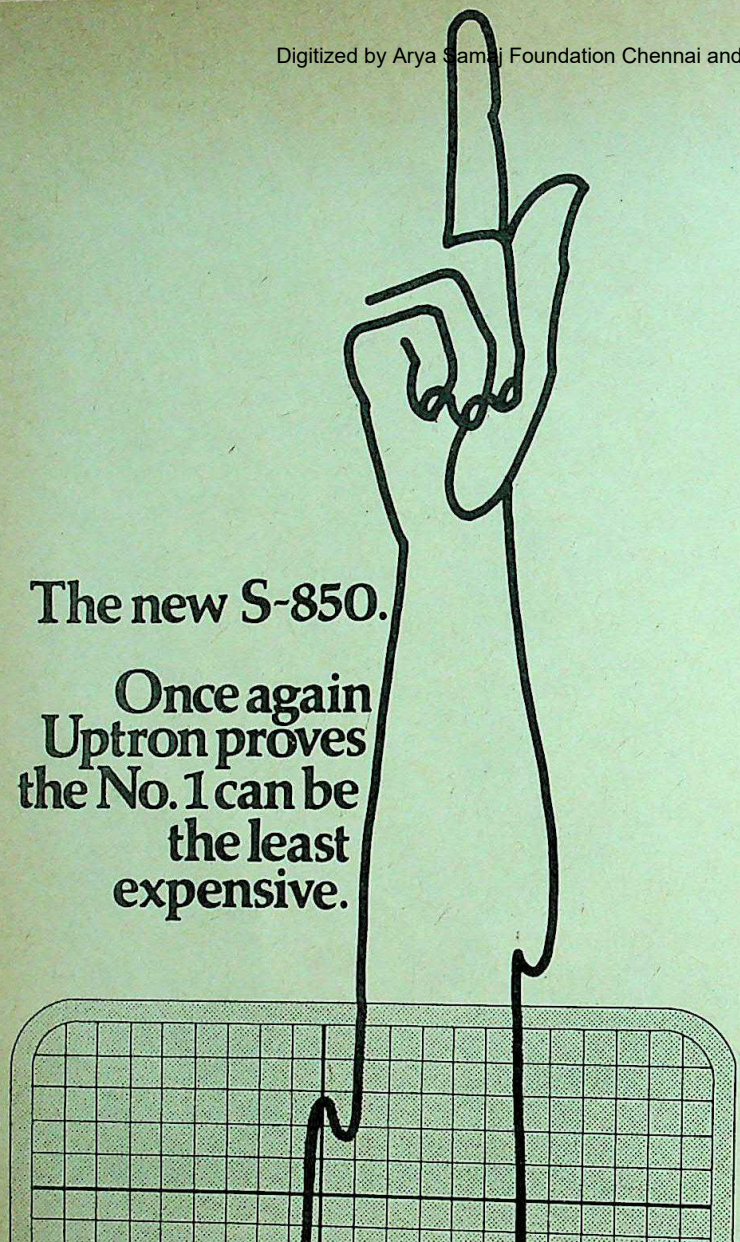

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ASSAM

Sounding Battle Stations

IT PROMISES to be the most bizarre election in the country's history. For four protracted and strife-torn years, the prickly "foreigner" issue in Assam has mushroomed into a full-blown agitation, defying all attempts at compromise or mediation. Now, with the Congress(I) Government having tried and discarded all other options, it has decided to gamble on winning through the ballot what it failed to accomplish through the carrot or the stick.

But by last fortnight, it was obvious that it was destined to be more a battle of the bullet than of the ballot. Ever since the Election Commission announced elections on January 6 for the 126-member Assam Assembly and 12 Lok Sabha constituencies vacant since the 1980 poll, the level of violence has escalated alarmingly in a militant response to the agitation leaders' call for a boycott. Bombs have exploded with alarming regularity destroying bridges and railway lines—and one damaging the pradesh Congress(I) committee office. Those opposing the boycott call, which really means anybody contesting the elections, have been issued with death threats and the tension is palpable.

Armed Support: In fact, never before in the history of the country has an election scenario been so threatening. The Government, in a vain bid to support their contention that the law and order climate was conducive to the holding of elections, has flown in 50 battalions of armed police, transforming the state into a battle zone.

To make matters worse many have been lodged in the hostels of educational institutions and public premises. Public transport is stalled in Gauhati with the commandeering of city buses. In the more sensitive parts of the state, there are more policemen than people belying the Government's claim that the citizens of the state need fear no threat of violence during the elections. "It is democracy at gunpoint," charged Sarat Sinha, former chief minister and chairman of the Left Democratic Alliance (LDA) who has refused police protection. "I refuse to go to the people seeking their vote with a bayonet-carrying policeman guarding me all the time," he added.

Others have not been so courageous. Upen Das, the Congress(I) candidate from Boko constituency, pleaded with party leaders to let him withdraw when he realised he was the only contender on the last date for filing nominations and feared he would be singled out for special attention. The request was refused and he now lives under armed guard. In fact, last fortnight, there was very little campaigning simply because of fears of reprisals. Das admitted nervously that he has "no intention of visiting my constituency". The four Congress(I) candidates who were elected unopposed tells its own story.

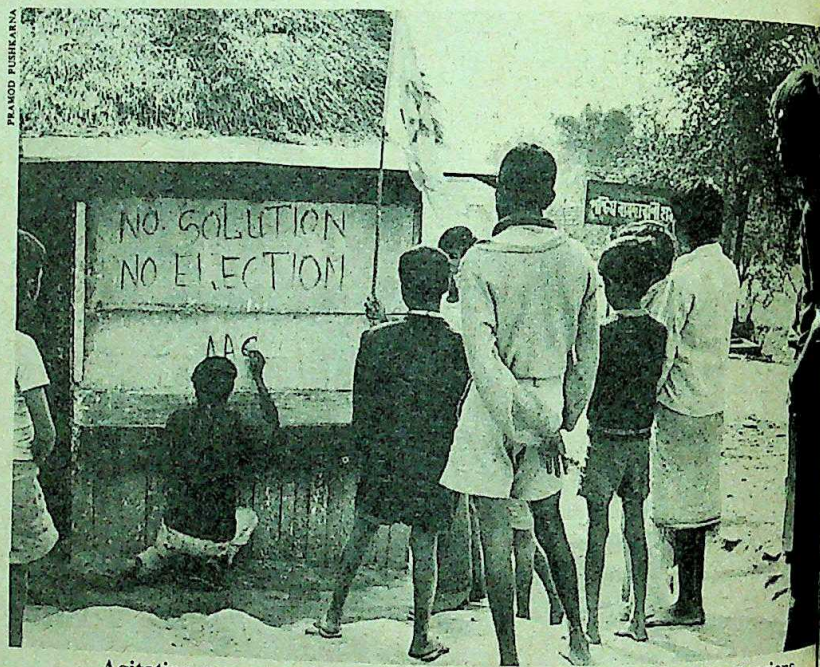
Among other incidents in the tense build-up to the Assembly elections:

► the son of the Congress(I) candidate at Palashpur was kidnapped and the candidate did not file his nomination. The next day he inserted a message in Gauhati's *Morning Star*, stating that he was not a candidate and should not be misunderstood;

► political parties held back lists of their candidates till such time that they could no longer be concealed. This was in order to protect them from reprisals at the hands of the agitationists and others opposed to the elections; and

► a call by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) to government officials to boycott offices on January 17 and a 35-hour bandh from the next morning resulted in large numbers of employees staying away from work in the state administration's threat to down heavily with the Essential Se Maintenance Act (EMSA). Not surpris only about 630 candidates had filed nations compared with the 1,049 contested the 1978 Assembly election

The Assam agitationists are not only ones who have boycotted the tions. Four national parties—the tw Dal factions, the Bharatiya Janata (BJP) and the Janata Party, which the state for two years, have boycott polls as well, calling it a "fake electio



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Agitation supporters broadcasting their boycott plea: escalating tensions

Ironically enough, the Gover had earlier consulted these very oppo parties to secure their cooperation constitutional amendment last year at extending President's rule beyond years. Most opposition parties asked Government to call a special sess Parliament to adopt the amendment gotiations with the agitationists fai yield results. Says Jaswant Singh, Rajya Sabha member: "During the the Government never made it clear was initiating the election process. We don't know why it precipitated the by going to the polls without solving foreigners issue."

Congress(I) spokesmen refute

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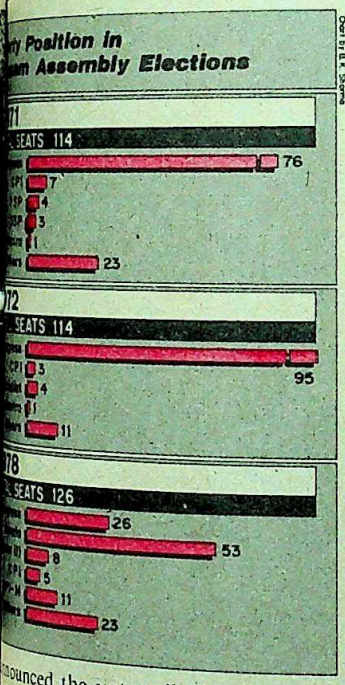
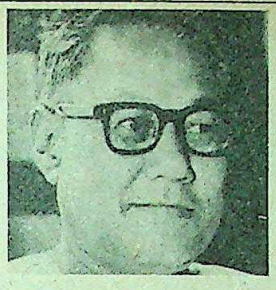
Says Rajendra Kumari Bajpayee, Congress(I) Committee (AICC-I) secretary in charge of the Nor- "The opposition parties were opposed to the idea of extending rule. I fail to understand their running with the hare and hunt- the hounds." The issue is not, as simple as that. In the midst of sion, there have been widespread that the electoral rolls have manipulated to give the Congress(I) advantage.

Charges: Opposition leaders charge ment with underhanded use of electoral rolls which contain an ming majority of the "foreigners" Assamese movement have been to expel from the state. Says "It is a strange election. The Gov- issued notification for the election



nounced the voters list on the same that there was just no time for claims and objections. What is parti- galling is that legally we can do about it."

Revision of electoral rolls has been the most basic of demands from tation leaders during their protract- negotiations with the Government. 13 rounds of discussions—the last of ended no closer to any settlement ary 5, 1983—the refrain has been ned: without a revision of rolls no would be possible. The entire citi- issue came to the fore because of franchisement of foreigners, and the leaders were adamant that within limits were mutually agreed, the should detect foreigners,



"It is democracy at gunpoint... I refuse to go to the people seeking their vote with a bayonet-carrying policeman guarding me."

—SARAT SINHA

delete their names from the electoral rolls and deport them from Assam.

Some idea of the scale of the problem can be gauged from the experience of the Mangaldoi by-election announced in 1979. The election was never held because objections were raised on the status of more than 46,000 people on the electoral rolls. On scrutiny, electoral officers rejected more than half of them. With the Centre having decided to go to the polls on the basis of existing rolls, the door for further negotiations has been slammed.

Even Baharul Islam, who quit his seat in the Supreme Court last month to contest as a Congress(I) candidate, admits: "It would have been more desirable for the rolls to have been properly revised." Adds Achintya Bhattacharya, leader of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), a major constituent of the LDA: "The rolls

"It would have been more desirable for the rolls to have been properly revised."

—BAHARUL ISLAM

are defective as names of a large number of Bengalis and Muslims were deleted when these were prepared in 1979 at a time when the agitation against foreigners had affected even the administration." Congress(I) leaders like Rajesh Pilot, the AICC(I) election adviser, also admit that the rolls do not contain thousands of names of those who were under voting age in 1979 but have attained it since.

Despite the charges and the escalating level of tension, both the Gauhati High Court and the Supreme Court last fortnight struck down appeals to stay the polls. As the Supreme Court opined: "It is not possible for a court of law to intervene when the election process has been set in motion."

Bad Portents: The result is that to most of the Assamese electorate, it is a battle between what is legally right but morally wrong. Current indications are that the turn-out on election day, February 14, will be the lowest ever recorded. The spontaneous and widespread response to the AASU and AAGSP call for an "office boycott" on January 17 and the 35-hour bandh the next day offer clear pointers to the likely election scenario.

But the pre-election scene continues to be bizarre with the Marxists having made their own "arrangements" to provide security for their candidates and the Congress(I) herding theirs into the MLA's hostel in Dispur under heavy guard. The ruling party is obviously anxious to avoid a repeat of the 1980 electoral experience when the agitationists had prevented elections being held in 12 of the 14 constituencies, the other two being in Cachar where the agitation is non-existent. But at the same time, it cannot afford to delay the election either and has changed its earlier decision to push through President's rule for a further two years.

Having squeaked through by virtue of defections in Nagaland and failed to storm the communist bastion in Tripura, Mrs Gandhi desperately needs to win in Assam. For one, this would prove a major deterrent to rising regionalism in the tinder-box North-east. But more important, it would help restore much of the face she has lost in the Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh polls.

Rising Violence: In this context, the boycott call by the agitationists and their supporters, threatens to turn the elections into a mockery. The agitationists have clearly won the first round in the battle with the security forces unable to control the rising tide of violence and campaigning has been reduced to a minimum because of threats to the candidates. Their efforts have been considerably bolstered by the

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decision of the non-communist Opposition to stay away.

This was evident by the mammoth crowd that turned up at Gauhati to listen to BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee exhorting them to boycott the elections. The non-communist Opposition is now planning to escalate their boycott campaign. Says former chief minister and Janata leader Golap Borbora: "We expect a greater response when we begin our public campaign."

But that is hardly the only handicap the ruling party faces. Going by its past record, the Congress(I) is not exactly regarded with much favour. In the 1978 Assembly elections, the party secured only a paltry eight seats compared to the Janata Party's 53 and the Congress(U)'s 26. Since then, Assam has been convulsed by alternative bouts of President's rule and suspended assemblies with the ruling party twice managing to form makeshift ministries under Anwara Taimur and Keshab Gogoi by winning over legislators from the Janata and other parties.

Vocal Gauhati voters opposing the elections: legally right, morally wrong

Unpopular Moves: The fact that the Government has clamped down press censorship and arrested the top leaders of the agitation movement has hardly helped their electoral cause. Says Nibaran Bora, former chairman of the Purbanchaliya Loka Parishad, an AAGSP constituent: "In the last three years, 91 people died, mostly in police action, while conducting the agitation. Their death is still fresh in the minds of the people and they will not spare any effort to foil New Delhi's conspiracy." In fact, it is clear that the abnormally large number of independent candidates in the fray are actually "rebel" Congress(I) supporters, now almost a permanent feature of any election process.

Arrayed against the Congress(I) is the six-party LDA comprising the Congress(S), CPI-M the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI), the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP). The combine have decided to share out the seats and also campaign for each other, with the Congress(S) having the lion's share of the seats (50) followed by the CPI (31), CPI-M (29) and the remaining distributed among the other parties.

But the LDA will have a difficult time convincing the electorate that they have anything better to offer than the Congress-(I). So far, the Marxists have lost eight of their comrades, all allegedly murdered by agitation supporters. Until now their campaigning has been understandably low-key with LDA leaders resolving to confine their efforts to a house-to-house level.

The curious thing about the Assam election is the fact that there really are no issues except of course, the long festering foreigners problem. Obviously, there is little that both the main contestants can offer by way of lures or solutions. Says Baharul Islam: "It is a far too complicated issue to be settled in the near future." Adds Sinha: "It would be too much to expect any state Government to solve a problem that has been allowed to grow for nearly one hundred years."

Careful Calculations: The Congress(I) is, however, convinced that it can form a popular ministry. In November 1982, it commissioned some MP's and senior Intelligence Bureau officials to conduct a survey of the state and submit a report on the party's prospects and the extent to which the agitationists would be able to disrupt the elections. The report, according to Home Ministry so[illegible] was favourable and recom[illegible]ed elections.

The party leadership [illegible]viously banking on the fac[illegible] with the agitation having [illegible]ed the electorate into rel[illegible] and linguistic lines, the B[illegible]li and Muslim-dominated [illegible]stituencies will vote their [illegible] Intelligence agencies hav[illegible]ported that the party is fa[illegible]rably placed to win a ma[illegible] of the 34 assembly seat[illegible] Cachar and Goalpara dis[illegible] where Bengalis and Mu[illegible] constitute over 70 per ce[illegible] the electorate.

An equal number of [illegible] will be contested in [illegible] which are dominated or [illegible]trolled by the local Assa[illegible] The remaining seats will [illegible] straight fight between [illegible] Congress(I) and the LDA [illegible] ruling party has also pu[illegible] its ranks with Muslim [illegible] Bengali candidates, over [illegible] per cent, and a fair sha[illegible] Indian National Trade U[illegible] Congress leaders to woo [illegible] plantation workers in the [illegible]

Prospects: But last [illegible] night, the overriding que[illegible] in Assam was not which [illegible] would win but whether the elections [illegible] be held at all. If the violence continue[illegible] situation may render it impossible to co[illegible] the poll. Already, there are strong [illegible]mours in Gauhati that polling officials [illegible] refuse to conduct the election.

Government spokesmen at D[illegible] have refused to divulge any details [illegible] there are indications that officials [illegible] the Bihar Government were being re[illegible]tioned to conduct the polls. The u[illegible]tainty has naturally given rise to LDA [illegible]cusations that the election will be r[illegible] a contention echoed by local Assamese [illegible] the agitationists.

Rebuke came from a still higher [illegible]thority late last fortnight when the Su[illegible]me Court stayed the Assam Govern[illegible] orders restraining the *Assam Tribune* [illegible] *Dainik Asom* from publishing any [illegible] relating to the current agitation. The [illegible] and appeal are clearly designed to [illegible] the elections fair, but are unlikely to [illegible]vince the electorate that the elections [illegible] give them the sort of government [illegible] want—or solutions to their problems. [illegible]mately it appears that the actual patte[illegible] polling may well have little relations[illegible] popular feelings.

—SUMANTA SEN in Gauhati with bureau [illegible]

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Matter Of Prestige

AFTER the battle for the south has been won and lost, the battle for the north is on. The capital city of Delhi, with an electorate of 36.6 lakh, goes to the polls on February 5. ...s will make their choice for the ...of the Municipal Corporation of ...d the 56 in the Delhi Metropoli... And as in the past, the natio... ...s, foremost among them the ...ly and the Bharatiya Janata ...y, are making a strident bid to ...ower in this most power-consci... ...es.

...he Congress(I), after its stunning ...Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, ...Delhi becomes all the more im... Making her first public appearan... ...e southern crash Prime Minister ...ndhi warned a gathering of local ...kers: "What happens in Delhi ...t throughout the country." BJP ...Atal Behari Vajpayee put it ...trically: "The eyes of the world ...ing what happens in Delhi; a ...been created from the Krishna ...auvery and Delhi has been given a chance to push this wave forward or push it back." Lok Dal (C) Chairman Charan Singh, whose party is fighting six of the 56 council seats and nine of the 100 corporation seats in alliance with the BJP, told a meeting of farmers in Najafgarh: "Delhi sets the trend of the nation."

Poor Response: Despite such apocalyptic claims, the parties had, 10 days before the booths opened, failed to drum up much enthusiasm from the voters. The interest of earlier years was missing and the response to requests for votes was distinctly hostile. Said Balwant Singh, a south Delhi taxi-driver: "All these politicians are thieves and the only reason they are spending Rs 3 lakh to Rs 4 lakh on their campaigns is because they hope to make much more later." Grumbled Suresh Kumar of Kalyanpuri, a resettlement colony for one-time jhuggi dwellers: "I'll vote for the man who cleans this nullah which hasn't been swept for six months." What makes soothsayers jittery is the reluctance of the voter to disclose whom he plans to vote for; "You'll know well enough after the votes are counted," is the common reaction.

Reflecting this studied disinterest, election rallies were thinly attended. The party workers rally at which Mrs Gandhi kicked off the campaign was modest. BJP General Secretary L.K. Advani could attract a crowd of only 200 at Gole Market —on the same spot, a resident recalled, over 10,000 had gathered in 1977 for an opposition meeting. In the resettlement colonies across the Yamuna, which are normally a sea of party flags at election time, there were just a few party flags fluttering from the rooftops.

The southern debacle came as a boost for the BJP which immediately brought out the slogan: '*Dakshin me Indira hari hai, ab Dilli ki bari hai*' (Indira has lost in the south, now it's Delhi's turn). However, H.K.L. Bhagat, minister of state for works and housing and president of the Delhi Congress(I) felt that there was no psychological disadvantage for his party. Says he: "A son has been born in N.T. Rama Rao's house and Vajpayee is trying to take the credit. The BJP lost its deposit in a large number of seats and has nothing to gloat about. The election results in the south only highlight the need for the return of a national and cosmopolitan party in Delhi, the capital of India."

Seesaw Vote: Traditionally, Delhi has seen a two-party tussle between the Congress and the Jan Sangh, the Congress and the Janata Party, or, as at present the Congress and the BJP. The Jan Sangh came to power in 1967, the Congress took over in 1972—although the Jan Sangh retained its hold on the corporation—and the Janata Party won in 1977. In the 1980 Lok Sabha election the Congress(I) captured six of the seven Lok Sabha seats gaining 50.40 per cent of the vote as against 37.90 per cent for the Janata and 6.85 for the Lok Dal.

This time round, however, the Janata Party could prove to be a spoiler for both the Congress(I) and the BJP as it is contesting 37 of the 56 Metropolitan Council seats. Says Delhi Janata Party President Kishore Lal: "We are a liberal cosmopolitan party with which most sections can identify." Another factor is a loose alliance of the Lok Dal (K), the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), H.N. Bahuguna's Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and Jagjivan Ram's Congress (J). In some of the poorer constituencies, traditional Congress (I) voters alienated from the party seem more inclined to turn to these two alternatives rather than to the BJP. But by and large the opposition parties are likely to cut more into Congress (I) votes than into BJP votes.

The Congress (I) high command issued warnings to warring party leaders to

(left) Charan Singh, Vajpayee and Sahani at an election meeting in Najafgarh: rallying together

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maintain unity. Jagdish Tytler, MP, appeared on the same platform as his old foe Lalit Maken, when the former Youth Congress leader led a reported 30,000 workers from the mill area back into the party. Welcoming them was none other than Rajiv Gandhi, setting at rest speculation that he would steer clear of the Delhi poll after the drubbing in the south.

The BJP had its share of wrangles, mainly over ticket distribution. Kanwar Lal Gupta, Delhi BJP vice-president and member of the selection committee, walked out of a meeting in protest and a special resolution had to be passed by the party which said that no changes would be made in the candidate list after the first list was out.

AS WORKS and housing minister for the last six months, Bhagat has done his best to woo the Delhi voter. Despite opposition from officials in the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), 400 of Delhi's 612 unauthorised colonies have been regularised, perpetual lease rights granted to some 15 lakh to 20 lakh residents in resettlement colonies and house owners have been permitted to build a third storey. The Congress(I) is also stressing its Asiad triumph and the consequent improvement in roads and lighting in the New Delhi area, "which the whole world has commended", as one of its posters points out.

The Delhi BJP President, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, also sees the Asiad as an election issue, but one which will backfire on the Congress(I). The party's charge is that Rs 1,800 crore have been spent on the Games of which Rs 200 crore were taken from Delhi's budget. Hotel plots were, BJP leaders charge, given out of turn to Congress(I) supporters. Quite a few residents agree that the Government's priorities seem lopsided. Remarked Bhagwan Das of Gita Colony: "Seven flyovers for New Delhi and they have still to build the long-promised bridge over the Yamuna."

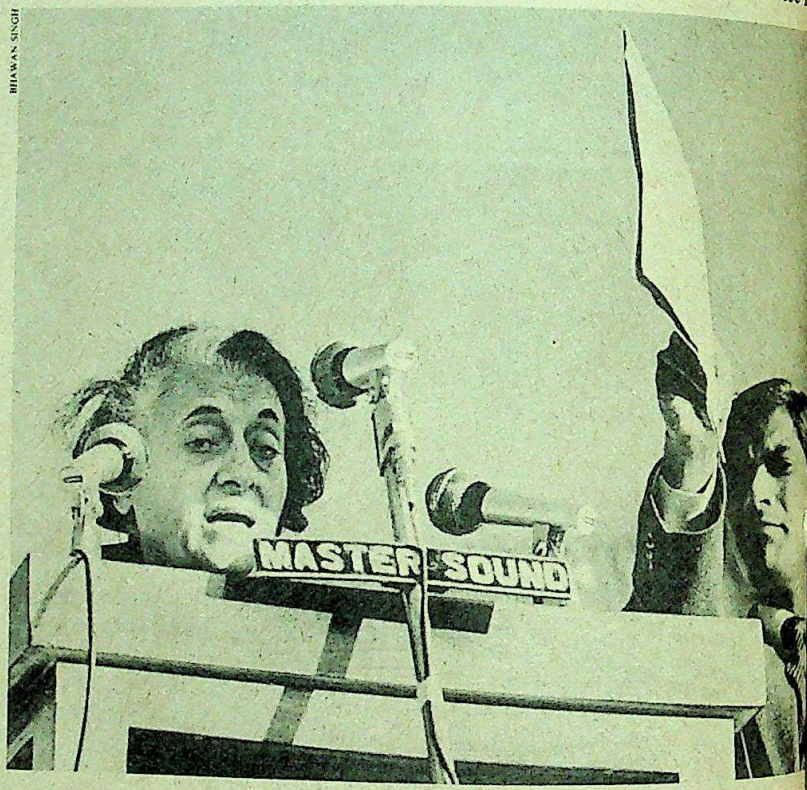
The BJP also planned to make an issue of the fact that Delhi has been without elected representation for three years. Less than two months after the Congress(I)'s victory in 1980, the council was dissolved and the corporation was superseded on the recommendation of Lt-Governor Jagmohan. In the early days of his tenure, Jagmohan aroused the wrath of both Congress(I) and opposition politicians for his 'authoritarian' ways, but since his return from exile as Goa's Lt-Governor has generally adopted a low profile.

Electoral Equation: The BJP hopes that its alliance with Charan Singh's Lok Dal will help it draw on the farmer leader's following among Gujjar, Jat and Haryanvi votes in the outlying areas of the capital. The party also continues to enjoy the confidence of the government employees: some of the more enthusiastic election rallies were in the government colonies of New Delhi where residents flocked to hear the BJP's star speaker, Vajpayee. But party leaders cannot but feel uneasy over the nine lakh voters added to the electorate since 1977. Most are jhuggi dwellers who have migrated from the neighbouring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The percentage of Punjabi refugee voters, once the hard core supporters of the Jan Sangh, has shrunk as a result.

The minority communities of the Sikhs and the Muslims account for 15 per cent of the electorate and are reckoned to be a crucial factor in 16 council and 45 corporation seats. While the Tara Singh faction of the Akali Dal has sided with the Congress(I), the Akali Dal (Longowal) has asked Sikhs to vote for anyone other than the BJP and the Congress(I). The Congress(I) hopes, however, that the Akali talks will end successfully before the poll, and help it get the Sikh vote. And the slim chance that the BJP had of gaining any Sikh votes was shot down when its showpiece Sikh vice-president, Jaswant Singh Phull, quit the party two weeks before the elections. Phull reportedly accused the BJP leadership of being reluctant to put up Sikhs as ca[illegible] for the polls.

Another embarrassment for [illegible] came in the person of Janata P[illegible] Subramaniam Swamy, who managed [illegible] an anti-BJP convention attend[illegible] former Jan Sangh and BJP leaders [illegible] Brij Lal Verma, S.N. Sarsunia, H[illegible] Devgun—and Phull. The BJP was also [illegible] ful about the attitude of the CPI, [illegible] not contesting from its labour stro[illegible] in the Sadar area, leaving the seats [illegible] alliance partners. Delhi BJP Vice-P[illegible] Gupta questions its motive in doi[illegible] and says: "This is to help the Con[illegible] at the instructions of Moscow."

Campaign War: As the ca[illegible] started picking up last fortnight, [illegible] gress(I) posters in blue and green [illegible] photographs of Rajiv and Mrs G[illegible] were plastered all over the city. The [illegible] slogan '*Bahujan hitay bahujan sukhay*[illegible] the good and the well-being o[illegible] masses)' was immediately parodied [illegible] Opposition by chopping the *jan* o[illegible] *bahu*—Maneka Gandhi herself [illegible] nowhere on the scene. The New [illegible] Municipal Committee which does [illegible] normally let commercial hoardings [illegible] for election purposes made a con[illegible] for the Congress(I) hoping perhaps [illegible] the walls of public property wh[illegible] spared. In vain; election graffiti spr[illegible]



BHAWAN SINGH

Mrs Gandhi addressing party workers at Vithalbhai Patel House in Delhi: saving [illegible]

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here: the Safdarjung flyover, for e was written over by supporters of Dass, once Sanjay Gandhi's car me- who now wields a hefty spanner in politics.

e of the more revealing incidents d in the Lajpat Nagar-Jangpura re- Here Congress(I) supporters ted a wall built along the railway ecause residents grumbled that since ilway's closure of the railway there they had to make a long to go from Lajpat Nagar to ra. The party put out pamphlets for support as they had removed "inconvenience". The railway ities looked embarrassedly away e broken wall and the security risk ndreds of residents walked across the line.

e rising hullabaloo of party politics best—or worst—tended to drown the at the Delhi Metropolitan Council e Municipal Corporation of Delhi tle going for them in the way of Admits former chief executive or K.N. Sahani, the BJP's Delhi an: "The Delhi Metropolitan is a totally powerless body. The the Executive Council, which is the part of a cabinet in other states, is that of an advisory council to the ernor. The chief executive coun- cannot sanction even the post of a without the clearance of the Finance y. In actuality even the corporation re power than the council, since it controls the revenues it earns." was evident from the mass of rallies, flags and posters, what ties were fighting for was not so the power as the glory.

—COOMI KAPOOR

ALAYA

miliar attern

COMPARED to the no-holds-barred electoral battles witnessed in recent times, the election to the 60-member Meghalaya Assembly will be a tame affair. There are few issues to e voter's mind in the tiny state: there insurgency as in Nagaland, no -tribal tension as in Tripura, and eigners' issue did loom some years but was nipped in the bud by regio- ders like former chief minister B.B. Lyngdoh of the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC). The voter doesn't even have much of a choice, as the three major forces in the field—the Congress(I), the APHLC and the Hill State Peoples Democratic Party (HSPDP)—were all in the coalition which has ruled the state for the last five years.

In fact, it was the election announcement that broke up the coalition, and not the coalition break-up that made elections necessary. The APHLC led by Lyngdoh left the front and it can be said that little became the party like the leaving: APHLC members left the Government in twos and threes so that the ruling front was not in a minority overnight, which would have meant a spell of President's rule. This graceful behaviour was reminiscent of 1978 when, after the coalition was formed, the chief minister question was settled with the toss of a coin in the presence of a padre: Lyngdoh called right and became top dog for two and a half years, Williamson Sangma of the Congress(I) taking over the reins afterwards.

Necessary Break: The common theme of Lyngdoh's APHLC and S.D. Khongwir's HSPDP is that the tribals should not allow Delhi to dominate Meghalaya's affairs beyond a certain point. They clearly could not have gone with this platform to the people while still in alliance with the Congress(I). Asked whether this was not opportunism of sorts, leaders of both regional parties explained that it was not so, that the coalition five years ago had to be formed as none of the constituents had got a majority in the Assembly—(Congress(I) —21, APHLC—18 and HSPDP—16) and the only way out—other than President's rule —was to come together. Says one leader: "Now, however, with the new elections we have to approach the electorate in our own ways."

Another reason why the coalition cannot go together in the poll is because each party has its own 'territory': the Congress(I) is strong in the Garo Hills and the APHLC is dominant force among the Khasis, and there is no way in which one can allow the other to eat into its bases, which could happen if there was an alliance. Also, the Khasis, being more advanced, tend to look down on the Garos and would not like to be associated with them in any alliance unless it was absolutely necessary.

Traditional Revival: According to political observers in Shillong an interesting feature of the coming elections will be the role of the church. The Khasis were the first tribe to be converted to Christianity but of late a movement has begun for the revival of their religious traditions. The movement has attracted such eminent Khasis like B.M. Pugh, the famous educationist. That the church has also noted the revivalist spirit is clear from the lavish Christmas celebrations it organised last year, which were far more gorgeous than any held before. The church, then, may well help the Christian APHLC leaders in a big way.

The Congress(I) is trying to woo the Khasis of Shillong and elsewhere through their craze for films and Amitabh Bachchan. Last fortnight, while the campaign was yet to gather momentum, the party spread the news that the Bombay superstar would be campaigning for its candidates. This evoked a quick and a favourable response from the jeans-and-jacket crowd in Shillong. Bachchan is not likely to turn up, but the electorate is used to broken promises.

But the ultimate trump card for the Congress(I) is Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, whose standing with Meghalaya tribals is undiminished. She will be in the state for two days in February. However, the political scene remains much the same as it was five years ago, the parties cannot really blame each other for maladministration as they were all part of it, and it looks as if the picturesque hill state will see the coin tossed once again.

—SUMANTA SEN in Shillong

BHAWAN SINGH

Chief Minister Sangma: coalition politics

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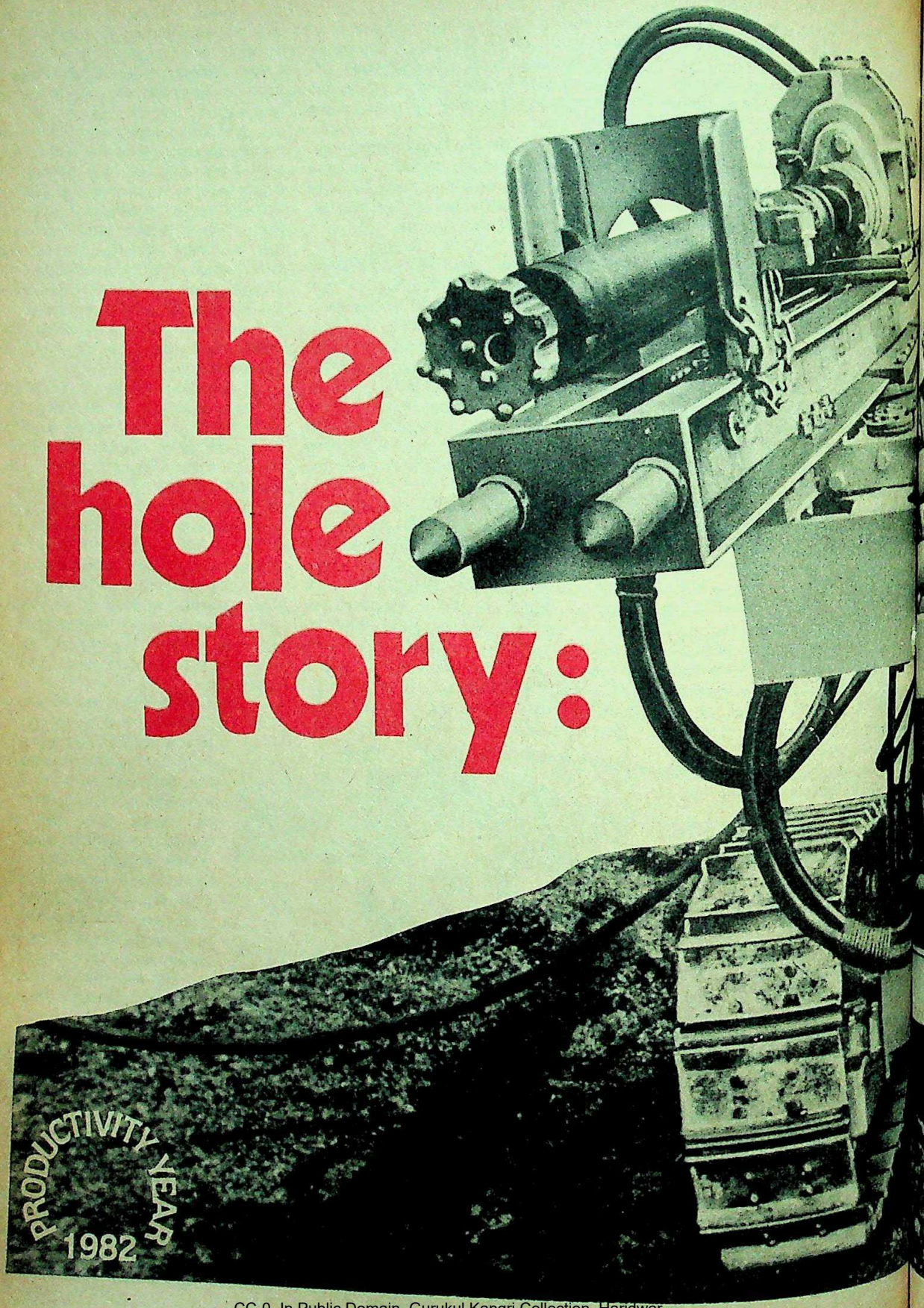
The hole story:



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(From left) Vajpayee, Chandrashekhar, Ram and Desai in 1977: failing to learn

POSITION

onfusion As Usual

DIAN politics seems to spawn the est of bedfellows, particularly in rather confused ranks of the onal Opposition. If last month's s in the southern Congress(I) of Andhra Pradesh and Karnata- warning bells for the ruling party, e equally loudly for mented national Op- Despite all the ver- the recent past about tion unity", it is em- ngly clear that it re- a mirage, and once ly emphasises the fact leaders of that amor- political grouping are g to different drum-

e 1977, when the ill- Janata combine snat- e reins of power, the political re- ive process that started in its ranks gressed to almost ludicrous lengths, y after the 1980 elections which ded Mrs Gandhi back into power. are now almost as many opposition as there are leaders. For next elections in Delhi, for instance, there are as many as seven national and two dozen minor parties who have thrown their hats into the ring. Paradoxically, the political climate has never been better for the Opposition. Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka telegraphed crystal-clear messages that the electorate is disillusioned and in search of a national alternative to the ruling party. But either the Opposition has misread the message or is too busy interpreting it in different ways.

Andhra and Karnataka telegraphed crystal-clear messages that the electorate is disillusioned and in search of a national alternative to the ruling party. But either the Opposition has misread the message or is too busy interpreting it in different ways.

Ill-prepared Opposition: Last fortnight, when the various opposition parties were analysing the election results, the only point they were unanimous on was that it reflected the rejection of the Congress(I). Their opinions on whom the southern electorate voted for, and why, were predictably varied. The Congress(I) having been totally decimated in Andhra Pradesh and to a slightly lesser extent in Karnataka, the Opposition reaction was largely tailored to assuage their individual consciences. The Lok Dal (C), for example, which failed to win a single seat in either of the states, deciphered an ominous warning for all the national-level opposition parties. Says Shyam Nandan Mishra, general secretary of the party: "People are looking for an alternative. If they cannot find one at the national level, they choose the regional ones. The south is as much a challenge to the national Opposition as it is for the Congress(I). It has not voted for a national party."

The upsurge of regional parties has caught the Opposition off guard and ill-prepared. But both the Janata Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) disagree with Mishra's view. Says Ramakrishna

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Hegde, the new Karnataka chief minister: "People have definitely chosen a national party in Karnataka. We could provide them with a clear and clean alternative. The electorate knew that they were electing a government in which the Janata would play a leading role." Adds Kishan Lal Sharma, BJP secretary: "In both Karnataka and Andhra, the national Opposition have been able to retain or expand their base considerably."

Selfishness: This inconsistency only highlights the fact that the problem of arriving at a concensus to provide a national alternative to Mrs Gandhi (who clearly is losing her former hold over the electorate) is one that is nowhere near being resolved. So far, despite having brought about favourable results in eight assembly elections and ten parliamentary by-elections, the national Opposition still remains a soaring tower of Babel, its members pouncing eagerly on any opportunity to run down one another. When Mrs Gandhi ordered elections in Assam and Meghalaya and civic elections in Delhi, it was widely expected that the Opposition would evolve a common strategy to undermine her even further. But all the signs point the other way. The leftist parties which ranged alongside the Janata in Karnataka and Andhra have decided to abandon the party in Assam and contest against it. Similarly, for the Delhi civic poll, both the CPI-M and the CPI have dropped the Janata Party from their alliance configurations.

Clearly, the inner contradiction the incestuous nature of the Opp puts any sort of unifying prospect b their reach—at least for the m None of the leaders of the brea factions of the Janata, like the Dal(K), Lok Dal(C), the BJP an remnants of the Janata Party itse willing to sacrifice their individual over the organisations they lead. In these four erstwhile Janata constitue more critical of each other than th of the ruling party, their logical e Meanwhile, the truncated Congress(only other non-communist party wor name, is too involved in its own s to bother about unity moves.

In fact, the very reason for the s

Where Are They Now?

WITH the national-level Opposition resembling a complex jigsaw puzzle and party-hopping becoming increasingly popular, it is hardly surprising that people find it difficult to remember which party former opposition stalwarts now belong to. Below is a compedium of Opposition leaders showing where they are now.

CHANDRAJIT Yadav 53, an advocate-turned-politician and chairman of the Janawadi Party of former Congressmen presides over more office, bearers than elected representatives from any state. The Janawadi Party has only three MP's—including himself, besides two MLA's—all from eastern Uttar Pradesh. A former Communist, Yadav's shifting political fortunes date from the '60s when he joined the ruling Congress. He became its general secretary in 1971, and from 1974 till 1977 he was minister of steel and mines in Mrs Gandhi's Cabinet. In 1978 he joined the Congress (Reddy) and in 1979 resigned to join Charan Singh's Janata (Secular) on whose ticket he was elected to the Lok Sabha. Later in the Lok Dal, Yadav quit to create the Janawadi Party.

KARAN Singh, 51, has reversed his earlier inhibitions towards the Jana Sangh(JS) and the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS) and currently heads the Virat Hindu Sammelan, dominated by former JS and RSS members and involved in propagating Hinduism and reforming Hindu society. His loyalty towards Mrs Gandhi lasted from his induction into her Cabinet in 1967 till 1977. After the Congress split in 1978, he joined the Congress (R) and became an education minister in Charan Singh's caretaker government as a sympathiser without actually joining the Lok Dal. He won the 1980 parliamentary election as the Congress(O) candidate from Udhampur constituency but resigned in early 1982 to become an independent member of the Lok Sabha.

HEMVATI Nandan Bahuguna, 63, the nimble-footed president of the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) has an impressive track record in the popular sport of party hopping. During the last three years, Bahuguna has changed his party affiliations five times. Appointed general secretary of the All India Congress Committee(I) in 1969 after the first Congress split, Bahuguna was ignominiously sacked from Uttar Pradesh chief ministership during the Emergency. Retrieving his fortunes with the new Congress For Democracy (CFD), alongwith Jagjivan Ram and Nandini Satpathy, he merged with the Janata in 1977 and rode the crest of popular favour as petroleum and fertilisers minister in Morarji Desai's Cabinet. Shifting his loyalties to Charan Singh's Janata(S), he resigned from the ministry in July 1979 and remerged as Union finance minister in the new Cabinet. Resigning three months later, he briefly revived the CFD and then, in a crowning volte-face, rejoined Mrs Gandhi in November only to quit both the Congress(I) and h parliamentary seat in May 1980. In th ensuing two years, he has launched new Democratic Socialist Front, got re elected to the Lok Sabha from Garhw as an independent candidate in Ju 1982, and floated the current DSP wi erstwhile foes like Raj Narain an Tarkeshwari Sinha.

GEORGE Fernandes, 5 a fiery trade union lead is currently with the L Dal (Karpoori Thakur), splinter faction of the Bharatiya Lok Dal headed by the ov bearing former prime minister Char Singh. The former Union minister h also changed his political c ours four times in the last five years. 1977, he merged his Samyukta Social Party (SSP) with the Janata Party, on to switch over to the Janata(S) whi pulled down Morarji Desai's governme in July 1979 when Charan Singh bro away from the ruling party. Wh Charan Singh launched the Lok Dal 1980, he shifted again and r mained with it until its split in 1982 Elected on the Janata(S) ticket fro the Muzaffarpur parliamentary cons tuency in Bihar, Fernandes currently organising labour movements Maharashtra and Karnataka.

RAJ NARAIN, 61, th mercurial DSP leader h changed his party affil tions as erratically as h eccentric headgear. Re ponsible for the downfall of tw prime ministers, Narain began h political career in the SSP, which h merged with Charan Singh's Bharatiya

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tion of opposition parties was not erences in ideology or commit- but solely that the various leaders to carve out their own little fief- ver which they could rule undi- d (*see box*). The Congress(J) of the -hill Jagjivan Ram, the Democra- alist Party (DSP) of H.N. Bahuguna he Janawadi Party of Charanjit are classic examples of the kind of ality-oriented politics within the tion fold. True, the Congress(I) suf- urrently from the same malaise, but Gandhi's overpowering personality, ld over the party and the size of the ess(I) empire give the ruling party's ms a different hue.

ven at the regional level, opposition leaders such as S. Bangarappa in Karnataka and Ratubhai Adani in Gujarat deserted their parties because of personality clashes and floated their own, merely to retain the illusion of power. The result has been a regurgitation of innumerable opposition parties, all demanding a share of the cake totally disproportionate to their organisational base or political clout. Admits L.K. Advani, BJP general secretary: "Any unity talks should take into account the credibility and influence of each group. But when we start talking about personalities, the whole question gets diluted." Adds Mishra, "The categorical imperative for unity is the realisation that no one party can prove itself a credible alternative."

UNFORTUNATELY, none of the parties tend to practise what they preach, and the game of musical chairs has never really ended. The Lok Dal, for instance, has split thrice since 1980, with each of the three groups staking their claim as the "real" Lok Dal. Two of its offshoots, Raj Narain's Janata(S) and Karpoori Thakur's Lok Dal(K) never really got off the ground. Pretty much of a non-starter, this Lok Dal breakaway has a motley crew ranging from George Fernandes and Madhu Limaye to Devi Lal and Biju Patnaik.

Even various merger moves begun sporadically in the recent past have come up against a forbidding wall. After breaking away from Charan Singh in August,

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Kranti Dal. Later he moved with the times in joining the Janata party, only to subsequently follow Singh into the Janata(S). However, he resigned after Singh's defeat in the January 1980 parliamentary poll and revived his own socialist party. Subsequently attempts at fraternisation with the Lok Dal yielded no political dividends, and in July 1982 he joined Bahuguna who had been his arch enemy until the June parliamentary poll.

MADHU Limaye, 60, an ailing socialist from Maharashtra, shares with his politician colleagues a propensity for short-lived political alliances. A respected parliamentarian, Limaye began his political career as a Congressman in 1938 but later joined the Socialist Party. He accompanied former socialists into the Janata in 1977 but left to join Charan Singh's Janata (S). He was to move to general secretaryship of the Lok Dal from which he resigned to join the Lok Dal(K) headed by his fellow socialist Karpoori Thakur.

KRISHNA Chandra Pant, 51, came home to the Congress(I) Parliamentary Party on the eve of the Delhi polls last fortnight, ending a brief estrangement, from 1978 to 1981, in an otherwise successful political marriage. Pant's long stint among the ranks of the faithful began in 1967 with his induction into Mrs Gandhi's Cabinet as minister of state and ended with the Congress defeat in March 1977. Becoming general secretary of the rebel Congress(R), the ubiquitous Pant was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Uttar Pradesh and held ministerial rank in Charan Singh's Cabinet from July 1979 till January 1980. The party's fall from power brought disenchantment in its wake, and Pant relinquished the Congress(R)'s general secretaryship in 1981 and began overtures to the ruling party. However, his willingness found fruition only three days after the Congress(I)'s debacle in the south.

JAGJIVAN Ram, 74, veteran Harijan leader, has finally hit a patch of enforced political retirement. For Ram, known for his political longevity, having won the Sasaram Lok Sabha seat for the seventh time consecutively, the last four years have been the only ones out of power. His political calculations going haywire after he left the Janata in 1980, he has dropped from the heights of deputy prime ministership and leadership of a national party to the presidentship of a party with his own name affixed to it. The party has only two MP's and less than half a dozen MLA's to its credit. Known as the Congress(J), the party came into being when Ram resigned from the Congress(S) in 1981 which he had joined after quitting Janata, and is currently run by his son, Suresh Ram.

BIJU Patnaik, 66, a pilot-turned-politician from Orissa has associated with eight different political parties in the last two decades. The veteran political manoeuvrer started his political career as a Congressman in the '40s launched the regional Utkal Congress in the '60s, and later joined Charan Singh's Lok Dal which merged in the Janata in 1977. Subsequently he followed Charan Singh into the Janata(S), officiated as Union steel and mines minister till Mrs Gandhi's return to power in January 1980, and again rejoined the Lok Dal. But in early 1982, he temporarily resigned from it on the question of opposition unity, to hold a separate convention of Janata, Lok Dal and Congress(S) in Chandigarh. However, in October 1982, he finally left Charan Singh for the Lok Dal(K) whose Orissa unit he has currently led back to the Janata Party. For Patnaik, the political wheel has turned a full circle after he was dispatched to Bangalore to manipulate the election of a Janata Party leader as Karnataka's first non-Congress chief minister.

TARKESHWARI Sinha, 56, is presently general secretary of Bahuguna's DSP. The youngest Congresswoman to become a Lok Sabha member in 1952, Sinha was deputy minister for finance in Jawaharlal Nehru's council of ministers. She has been politically sidelined ever since she parted company with Mrs Gandhi in 1969 and joined the Congress(O). But in 1974 she returned to Mrs Gandhi's fold, and unsuccessfully contested the Samastipur Lok Sabha by-election in 1978 on a Congress(I) ticket. Changing her political course in the same year, she shifted to the Congress(R) and became its general secretary. She, however, quit in January 1982, and after a brief period of political hibernation resurfaced in the DSP in July 1982.

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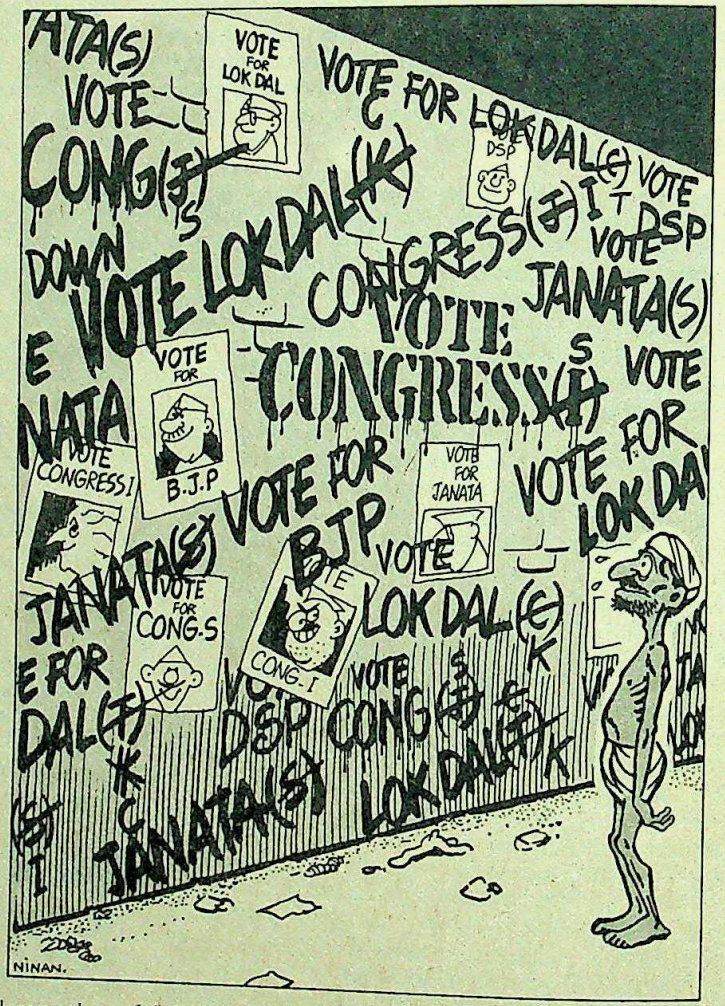
1982, the Lok Dal(K) leaders revived the plan to forge unity among "like-minded political groups" to gain a respectable numerical strength. In October last year, Thakur constituted a four-member panel consisting of Biju Patnaik as chairman and George Fernandes, K.R. Arya and Sharad Yadav as members to create a single party by merging the Janata, DSP and the Janawadi Party. Almost simultaneously, Janata Party President Chandrashekhar followed suit by announcing the formation of a negotiating team led by Madhu Dandavate to work out the blueprint for the merger. After half a dozen meetings, an 11-point blueprint for a merger of the Janata Party with the Lok Dal(K) was prepared. Predictably, disaster struck in the form of Morarji Desai who refused to accept people into the fold who had been responsible for his ouster as prime minister.

Since then, the unity dialogue has continued to be a charade with each of the leaders accusing the other of creating hurdles in the way. But the biggest hurdle is obviously the question of prestige and spoils of office. Says Ram Vilas Paswan, the Lok Dal(K) MP who was part of the negotiating team: "The stage for unity was set, but it was Morarji Desai who scuttled the talks." The Janata party leaders, however, accuse the Lok Dal(K) of plotting their own palace coup since they insisted that Thakur be appointed convener of the steering committee which would conduct elections for various forums. All too obviously, the entire fruitless unification exercise was conducted with the express motive of retaining or capturing control over the organisation, rather than trying to evolve a credible national alternative.

Contradictions: Finding the Janata door slammed in their faces, the Lok Dal(K) leaders retraced their tracks and attempted to reopen a dialogue with Charan Singh. On January 7, shortly after the southern state elections in which both parties supported common candidates, Fernandes met with Charan Singh on two separate occasions. Intriguingly, on the second one, he was accompanied by Raj Narain who was obviously representing Bahuguna's DSP. In the four-hour parleys, the possibility was discussed of a merger between the two Lok Dal factions and the DSP. But the talks once again came to naught over Charan Singh's insistence that all those who had left his party earlier, barring Haryana's Devi Lal, should first rejoin his party unconditionally. Though Lok Dal(K) spokesmen deny it, the basic motivation behind the unity talks was to prevent the forging of a BJP-Lok Dal(C) alliance for the Delhi poll. But despite the setbacks, opposition leaders express cheerful optimism about the prospect of unity. Says Bahuguna: "If we don't come together, we will sink together." Hegde agrees when he says: "The Karnataka experiment is bound to become a trend-setter for future opposition unity."



But their optimism seems largely unfounded. Almost every party is riven with personality clashes or ideological differences that will take a herculean effort to iron out. The Janata Party, which has acquired the most credibility after the Karnataka elections, is still a tenuous amalgam of former Congress(O) stalwarts like Morarji Desai and socialists like Chandrashekhar and Surendra Mohan. In the Lok Dal there are obvious signs that Devi Lal Fernandes are pulling the party in rent directions, while the BJP is weak considerably by the internal battle betw the moderates led by Atal Behari Vajp and the die-hard RSS members led Sunder Singh Bhandari.

Inflated Egos: Ironically, the resul the recent elections have only added to unity problems. Both the Janata Party the BJP have, by virtue of their consid ble electoral successes, ra their political price as far the rest of the opposition ties are concerned. They feel that they can s demand a larger slice of cake. This sudden inflatio political egos has been bo red by their belief tha number of former Janata ders will now rejoin parties. The parties now to be the only two which some credible national rations. The Janata has a in Maharashtra, Assam, G rat, Kerala and Rajas while the BJP has a size following in Hima Pradesh, Jammu & Kash Madhya Pradesh, Rajas Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, B Gujarat and Maharas But leaders of both feel a same time that they more to gain personally retaining their sepa identities.

The only hope now an opposition unity marr is that the other m opposition parties wither the vine and leave the picture less clouded. Congress(S) is already on verge of becoming a reg party with most of national-level leaders like K Pant, A.K. Antony, Tarkeshwari S and Sharad Pawar having joined (or about to join) either the ruling party other opposition parties. Similarly, Janawadi Party and DSP are waiting the dust to settle before deciding which the bigger factions to join. Curr however, what emerges is an all-too-f liar stalemate with tentative feelers put out. Till the next electoral jous Assam, Meghalaya and Delhi reveals w way the wind is blowing, the pampe prima donnas will continue to raise individual voices.

—PRABHU CHA

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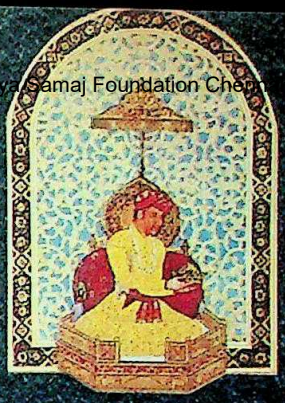

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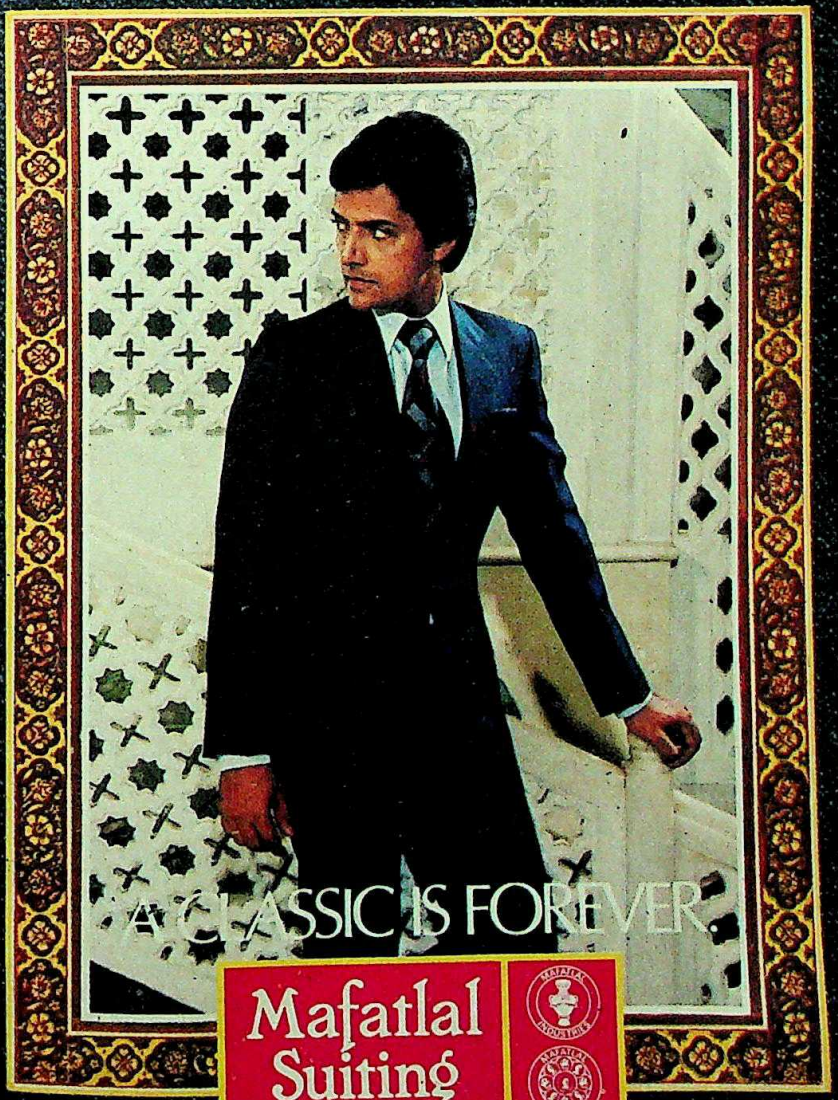

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ASS(I)

Yielding The Broom

TOOK the generally shock-proof ice of the Congress(I) a couple of ks to pick up the tremors of the in Andhra Pradesh and Karna-but, at the end of last fortnight, ere sure signs of the quake homing first round of hiring and firing around the Republic Day, as a acknowledgement of the fact that might after all not have been in order.

a swift move, reminiscent of the plan two decades ago, the entire cabinet submitted its resignation to Minister Indira Gandhi. A few days Mrs. Gandhi revamped her ministry, Union Irrigation Minister Kedar among others, and inducting a fresh including former chief ministers V.P. and K. Vijayabhaskara Reddy, Cabinet rank; Buta Singh, minister for sports, was also elevated to status.

rand Plan: Mrs Gandhi embark-her grand plan on January 22, ng to sources close to her. it is not yet clear where the will ultimately end up, it was that Mrs Gandhi felt that with pressure mounting, tinkering with blem would earn her no elec-dividend. In the context it was a move, for in the last three years dropped only seven ministers ding only two cabinet minis-and restricted herself to cabinet es every now and then. In the hers has been a placid govern-described as stable by her sup-, a congealed, inert mass by her tors.

ven so, Mrs Gandhi is not about to all her ministerial colleagues. But it ear that with a new parliament ses-starting mid-February, and three going to the polls, time was oppor-o drop some ministers, shuffle others , perhaps even change chief minis-etain those colleagues who in her had shown results and find new

The man to put his neck on the guil-first was Sitaram Kesari, the Union er of state for parliamentary affairs, the high voltage fund-raiser who had sent to Andhra Pradesh as an obser-of the All India Congress Com-(AICC-I). Kesari, who is also the treasurer, said he had resigned from council of ministers on his "own choice" and in order to "strengthen the hands of Mrs Gandhi". Normally Kesari is not credited with such a fine spirit of sacrifice in public life, and his exit, as the AICC(I) sources admitted in private conversation, could be interpreted as a rebuff from the high command to the general "finance and political mismanagement" of the campaign efforts in the two southern states.

Interestingly enough, Kesari turned out to be "a pilot car for the convoy to follow later", as one Congress(I) official put it. In leading the way Kesari obligingly called on his ministerial colleagues in the states and at the Centre to return to organisational and party work to build up the party again. Not unexpectedly, none of Mrs Gandhi's senior colleagues at first chose to heed Kesari's advice. But a meeting was held on Republic Day at the home of Union Deputy Minister for Railway S. Mallikarjun with five other junior ministers. The six decided to act and addressed a joint letter to Mrs Gandhi saying that they would like to be relieved from government responsibility to enable them to work for the party.

FOCUS

Mrs Gandhi with Tripathi: new moves

This letter with six signatures was then taken to all junior ministers—ministers of state and deputy ministers—to collect additional signatures. This finally prompted the cabinet ministers—at least those who were in Delhi—to send in their own letters. And by nightfall on Republic Day, Mrs Gandhi had almost all the resignations she wanted securely in her hands.

Meanwhile, other moves were afoot at the party level. The same day, Kamalapati Tripathi, the 77-year-old sylvan-haired poor uncle of the party, came in from the cold. At a meeting of the Congress(I) Central Parliamentary Board (CPB), Tripathi, who had been axed from the Union Cabinet in November 1980, was formally asked to "look after the affairs of the party".

Unexpected Move: The decision took the party by storm. This was the first time since Mrs Gandhi put her iron grip on the party in 1978 that she actually called in someone to sit at the helm of its affairs. In the past she had consistently stonewalled herself against all exhortations to bifurcate her charge and leave the party affairs to another person.

The same CPB meeting also confirmed the decision to postpone the organisational elections from January till March this year, thus deferring the prospect of the AICC(I) having an elected president and an elected secretariat by another two months. Technically, Mrs Gandhi continues to be the *ad hoc* president of the AICC(I), but it is now Tripathi's turn to shepherd the unknown (and unknowable) number of party members all over the country into the organisational polls.

Many in the Congress(I) believe that Tripathi is not quite the man of the hour. His age undoubtedly works against him in building up a workable rapport with the new generation of leaders, many of whom stormed into the party's fold in the trail of the late Sanjay Gandhi.

Tripathi, who promptly declared himself a loyal Congress(I) worker of 63 years standing, was obviously pleased at his elevation after having been sidelined for so long. A day after he was given responsibility, four of the party's five general secretaries, G.K. Moopanar, Vasantdada Patil, Chandulal Chandrakar and Satyanarayan Rao (the fifth, Rajendra Kumari Bajpayee was away electioneering in Assam) also handed in their papers to clear the way for a brand new team to work with Tripathi.

Even as the initial shock waves ebbed away, Mrs Gandhi was signalling a new message to her party. For the first time since the Sanjay Gandhi shock brigades seized control of the party and guided it back to office in the 1980 Lok Sabha election, she had made a decisive turn towards the neglected, sulking old guard. Having dabbled disastrously with brash, raw and ill suited newcomers, last fortnight she reached back to people who may not have shouted their loyalties from the roof-tops, but in long years of politics had picked up the one attribute that cannot be easily replaced: experience. And the question being asked was, of course, would the latest face-lift be another cosmetic effort that came too late?

—SUMIT MITRA

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BHAWAN SINGH

Akali leaders return after submitting their resignations to the vice-president: marking time

PUNJAB

Breathing Space

THE AKALI Dal's Republic Day decision to submit the resignations of four party MP's and 34 MLA's, post-dated three weeks to February 21, indicates a victory for the moderates in the party who have won some breathing space for trying to untangle the knotty problem in the volatile state. The decision to post-date the resignations followed an acrimonious debate for over eight hours in Amritsar's Golden Temple, with hardliners Tohra, Talwandi, Sukhjinder Singh and most of the district jathedars pressing for resignations "right now". Finally, Rajinder Kaur, MP and daughter of the late Tara Singh came up with the compromise formula of post-dating the resignation letters.

Agreement was reached at the meeting for stepping up the morchas and for boycotting the Delhi polls. The hardliners were hopeful that once the resignations were submitted it would herald the start of a total civil disobedience movement, involving non-payment of taxes, transport fares, gheraos of government offices and a march towards a fully autonomous Punjab.

The first round of tripartite talks, between the Akalis, government representatives and the Opposition in Delhi which concluded on January 25 was not exactly the "major gain" that it was heralded to be by a section of the press. However, it indicated at least a temporary defusing of the situation. P.S. Badal described the Centre's willingness to reopen the agreement between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan on the sharing of the Ravi-Beas waters as "some silver lining to the cloudy sky", though Longowal continued to harp on his theme of "total justice and nothing short of this".

Tentative Agreement: Vetoing the Akali demand for a review by the Supreme Court, the Centre agreed instead to refer the matter to the River Water Tribunal. This, however, will be possible only with the consent of the chief ministers of Haryana and Rajasthan as it nullifies the Centre's award of March 1976 and December 31, 1981.

To what extent the chief ministers of these two states will be co-operative remains uncertain. Haryana's Bhajan Lal plagued by an acute power crisis and anger over his manipulation of defections to his fold can ill afford to antagonise the people of his state at this juncture. Bhajan Lal was in the capital last fortnight, ostensibly for an eye operation. Congress(I) MLA's and district Congress(I) presidents also camped in the capital while the tripartite talks were on. The warning was held out that Haryana MLA's could also resign *en masse* if the state's claims were compromised. "Bhajan Lal feels confident that he could win another poll on the issue of Punjab usurping Haryana's rights," commented a supporter. Another did not rule out that the wily master of the art of defections would change his party colours once more on this issue. Nine Haryana Lok Dal(K) MLA's also delivered the threat of resignation. From Rajasthan, C[illegible] Minister S.C. Mathur, also threate[illegible] retaliation.

When the tripartite talks resume at [illegible] end of the first week of February the tric[illegible] question—of territorial adjustment—wi[illegible] taken up. The Akalis are hopeful that [illegible] Centre would be agreeable to delinking [illegible] issue of Chandigarh from the return [illegible] Abohar and Fazilka tehsils of Ferozep[illegible] Haryana. The Akali thrust is that [illegible] Chandigarh could be handed over to Pu[illegible] the latter territorial question could be [illegible] ferred to a commission. But, political ob[illegible] vers were hopeful that such a compro[illegible] would in fact be acceptable. The only [illegible] where headway seems smooth is the Ak[illegible] religious demands on which there are [illegible] minor squabblings over details.

Shrewd Move: Involving [illegible] Opposition in the Akali talks is seen [illegible] shrewd move on the part of the pr[illegible] minister. If the Government is forced to [illegible] hard decisions, it would be more appropr[illegible] for it to seem that there is a nati[illegible] consensus. As the *Hindustan Times* pu[illegible] "The issue has been taken out of the nar[illegible] confines of a dispute between a regi[illegible] party and the ruling party into an i[illegible] involving the nation as a whole. To [illegible] extent it would not be possible for [illegible] political party to exploit the issue any fur[illegible] for political ends."

The moderates in the party were [illegible] sitive to the danger of the Dal ge[illegible] isolated. Balwant Singh, one of the deleg[illegible] at the meeting pleaded with the prime mi[illegible] ter: "The extremists are only marking [illegible] Do not allow this opportunity to go wa[illegible]

But, whether the extremists in the p[illegible] would be appeased after the next roun[illegible] talks in early February remained doub[illegible] As a warning five bombs went off in [illegible] crowded central localities of Amritsar [illegible] January 26.

Even the selection of the Akali tea[illegible] the talks raised eyebrows that the party [illegible] fielding a junior team of Balwant Sing[illegible] former finance minister under Badal, [illegible] Inder Singh, a class-mate of Rajiv Gandh[illegible] Doon School and S.S. Barnala, agricult[illegible] minister during the Janata regime becaus[illegible] did not take the meeting seriously. In [illegible] sequence the prime minister stayed a[illegible] from the negotiations which were held at [illegible] level of the home minister. Opposition [illegible] ders A.B. Vajpayee, H.N. Bahug[illegible] Indrajeet Gupta and Charan Singh [illegible] absented themselves from the talks and s[illegible] their deputies. However, the big three—[illegible] Badal, G.S. Tohra and Talwandi—rema[illegible] in Kapurthala House, Delhi while the ta[illegible] were on and worked behind the scenes.

—COOMI KAPOOR and GOBIND THUKRAL

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Best sports coverage	6	16	20	**31** ✓	27
Best political commentary	3	30	3	**50** ✓	14
Best investigative articles	8	**45** ✓	7	**33**	7
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MAHARASHTRA

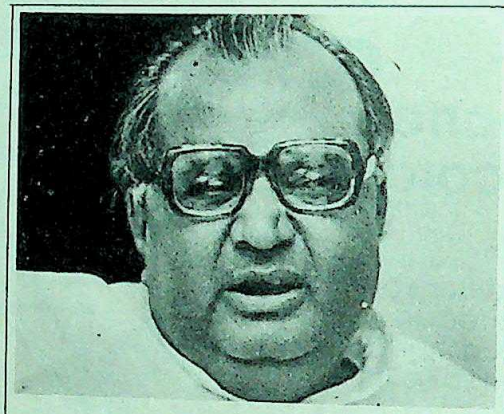
Bhosale's Last Stand

LIKE the beat of a metronome gone wild, the moments ticked away for Maharashtra Chief Minister Babasaheb Anantrao Bhosale last fortnight. Teetering precariously in the position he has held for only 376 days, the podgy barrister known more for his clownish antics than administrative ability spent the last few days measuring the minutes as reports of his imminent ouster gained momentum. "There is no doubt now that he is going," said a senior Congress(I) leader in Bombay, "the only thing which remains to be worked out is who should replace him." Emboldened by the virtual capitulation of the party high command, which had deputed observers from the Centre to report on the situation in the state, groups of dissident Congressmen intensified their campaign. Last week, they rejoiced when Congress(I) Working President Kamalapati Tripathi finally announced that Bhosale would soon be replaced.

The charade was awesomely familiar. In a virtual repeat of the events of a year ago, when ex-chief minister A.R. Antulay was ignominiously removed after an indictment by Bombay High Court's Justice Lentin, Congress(I) legislators in Bombay spent a hectic fortnight politicking for the choice of a successor. Then, as now, a group of MLA's led by an outwardly inactive Antulay, campaigned vigorously for their leader's reinstatement. Reinforcing the sense of *déja vu* were the splinter groups led by an assortment of Maharashtra leaders, each staking their claim to the prized chief ministership. And again, although this time the ostensible priority was unseating a chief minister instead of installing a replacement, the state Government guest-house in Bombay was flooded with legislators who had come to give their views on the chief minister in individual meetings with Central ministers Buta Singh and Shiv Shankar.

Events moved rapidly in Maharashtra. Escalating suddenly into no-holds barred warfare after a group of unruly dissidents abused Bhosale in the course of a legislature party meeting in Nagpur last December (INDIA TODAY, January 15), the confrontation between Bhosale and his detractors hotted up last fortnight. Six legislators, including declared Antulay supporters Bhaurao Patil and Ram Pandagle, were suspended from Congress(I) membership, but this did not prevent a privilege motion against the chief minister by partymen after he called the dissidents "impotent goondas".

Publicised Criticism: By mid-January, dissidence in the Maharashtra Congress(I) reached its flash-point. Launching a highly-publicised attack against Bhosale, even members of his own ministry began making speeches and statements against his functioning, while the more militant of the Antulay faction started a campaign to prove that Bhosale was more corrupt than the ex-chief minister. Reports leaked to the Bombay press charged Bhosale with violating a 1981 Central Government directive in order to grant liquor distilling licences to friends and relatives, and another accused the chief minister of irregularly allotting flats in prime downtown Bombay real estate to his family members. Only a few days before this, staunch Bhosale supporter and right-hand man Dr Shrikant Jichkar, minister of state for home affairs, was accused of manipulating government purchases to award lucrative contracts to his father brother. Little proof was offered to the charges, but they had the de impact.



Ironically, it was while Babasaheb Bhosale celebrated his 62nd birthday at the chief minister's residence that the Central observers sealed his fate a short distance away.

Accelerating the brewing crisis in party, the open mud-slinging was at in part responsible for Central obse being sent to Bombay, since the front newspaper reports accusing fellow members of corruption proved embar ing for the Congress(I). Bhosale sup ters retaliated in kind, accusing Bala Pawar and other dissidents of objecti the chief minister only because he not amenable to granting them sp favours. Last fortnight, the public wa of Congress(I) underlinen was ca a step further when the pro-Bh faction leaked xerox copies of l from Bhaurao Patil to Jichkar se to manipulate police transfers Bombay.

Bhosale's retaliation against detractors took the form of a action too. Adopting an aggressive tack, on January 13 Bhosale d three pro-Antulay ministers to home, admonished them for m public utterances against the Go ment they were a part of, and re edly asked them to hand in resignations. The move came surprise since Bhosale himself was too secure at the time. But it bro the crisis to the boil.

Aggressive Tactics: Ironical was while Babasaheb Bhosale brated his 62nd birthday at the minister's residence that the Ce observers sealed his fate a short tance away. The state Governm Ambar Guest House was mobbed groups of Congress(I) legislators party workers from the different tions, who trickled into the obser rooms to depose on whether or they wanted a change. Making a umphant entry around midday when buses loaded with members of the A lay, Y.B. Chavan, and Vasantdada groups rolled into the guest-house, dissidents milled about on the lawns, where they hurled taunts and invita to neutral and undecided party memb "It was clear to any observer that we in a majority in the state," said A Chand Shah, a dissident Congress from Bombay, "we have at least 130 behind us, all of them Indira Gandhi

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want this man to go."

ming a minimum strength of 120 of the Congress(I)'s total of 234 236-seat Assembly, the dissident sist that they remained united de- empts by the Central observers to them by asking for their preference minister. "We decided that we will drawn into any controversy on the chief minister till the high command to remove the present one." Said Patil, the suspended Congress(I) who acted as Antulay's chief during last year's succession strug- This is just a means of dividing us ming more time for Bhosale, since now that there will be some disag- on the choice of a new chief r."

ead, the dissidents handed over a endum against Bhosale which they signed by 122 legislators. Included the signatories are the three minis- ked by Bhosale, a group of roughly MLA's led by Vasantdada Patil, an d 30 from Y.B. Chavan's faction.

gressmen were so complacent. Prabhakar Kunte, a Congress(I) loyalist and one-time Maharashtra minister who has remained neutral in the Bhosale affair, stated that though the dissidence started out as a fight for the *gaddi*, the Andhra Pradesh election fiasco had made legislators aware that a weak chief minister could be disastrous for the party. "The main worry today is whether Bhosale can lead the party in the 1985 polls," said Kunte, "and on that count up to 80 per cent of the legislators now disapprove of his leadership. The people of Maharashtra have not liked being given two bad chief ministers whose competence and integrity have been suspect. So the MLA's have realised that now they need a man capable of the Herculean task of persuading the electorate to re-elect the Congress(I)."

But the choice of a successor to Bhosale will not be easy. Nominally united in their efforts to dislodge the chief minister—since any signs of groupism could be construed by the high command as a sign that Bhosale be continued—the

For Congress(I) President Indira Gandhi, the options were severely limited. Of the major contenders for the post, Vasantdada Patil, Y.B. Chavan and Union Planning Minister Shankarrao Chavan are "late comers" who fail the crucial test of personal loyalty since each had left her party in the mid-'70s. And Antulay, who lobbied vigorously for the post last fortnight, is tainted by the charges of corruption which are still to be disposed of by Bombay courts. Explained one Congressman: "After Andhra and Karnataka, the alternatives for Mrs Gandhi are all dangerous. Her magic charm has failed, the myth of invincibility is destroyed, so if a wrong choice is made dissidence may grow into open conflict within the party, and even with the high command. So it will have to be a man who enjoys the highest personal confidence of Mrs Gandhi, and most of these are incompetent."

Limited Choice: Even in pulling in a rank outsider as she has done repeatedly in the past, she will face the same lack of credibility. The Maharashtra Congress(I)

Antulay

Patil

Chavan

Adik

Dhote

Headed by diverse leaders with little or nothing in common—Antulay, Vasantdada Patil, Y.B. Chavan, Ramrao Adik and Jambuvantrao Dhote—the groups are historically irreconcilable and unlikely to accept a consensus candidate.

terminate number of the younger tors who owe allegiance to Antulay dozen led by Vidarbha Congress- mbuvantrao Dhote.

end fortnight, however, Bhosale at the figures advanced by the di- stating that the dissident faction minority in the Congress(I) ture Party. Said the chief minister: not wish to comment on the si- since this is a delicate decision for gh command which will only be cated further if I say anything, but by my earlier statement that there more than 30 or 32 dissidents. Any gure is an exaggeration."

ided Dissidents: Not all Con-

Maharashtra dissidents are nevertheless as sharply divided as before. Although they refused to indicate the strength of the rival groups to Shiv Shankar and Buta Singh, this remains the crux of the problem. Headed by diverse leaders with little or nothing in common—Antulay, Vasantdada Patil, Y.B. Chavan, Ramrao Adik and Jambuvantrao Dhote—the groups are historically irreconcilable and unlikely to accept a consensus candidate. Chavan, Patil and Antulay have all served spells as chief minister, and they are sworn enemies of each other. Adik and Dhote, who have little experience in government, could prove unequal to the challenge of rallying Congressmen in the problem state.

today is characterised by a motley collection of leaders with a history of disloyalty, corruption, or unproven competence. Pratibha Patil, who served as leader of the Opposition in Maharashtra after the Congress(I) downfall in the state's 1978 elections, is nevertheless damned because she had earlier left Mrs Gandhi to join the splinter Congress, and only rejoined when the party was in its upswing. Dhote, a Vidarbha leader who headed his own party, the Forward Block, and merged with the Congress(I) early in 1978, inexplicably passes the loyalty test but has no experience of administration. And Ramrao Adik, possibly the most favoured contender because he is both loyal and has

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served in two ministries, is nevertheless an undistinguished man who is unlikely to hold the party together for the next two years. Said Murli Deora, president of the Bombay Regional Congress Committee(I) (BRCC-I), a largely impartial observer of the succession struggle: "In removing Babasaheb Bhosale, the remedy should not become worse than the disease... Bhosale has a clean image at least, so we should not repeat the Andhra experience."

Astoundingly, by the end of the fortnight Antulay appeared to enjoy a substantial following among the dissident Congressmen. Unlike Vasantdada Patil and Y.B. Chavan, who have traditional power bases with their inevitable antagonisms among factions, the notorious ex-chief minister has effectively built up a group of followers whose loyalty stems from the promise of patronage. Instrumental three years ago in the allotment of Congress(I) tickets for the Assembly elections, Antulay has today become a rallying point for the large group of Congressmen who, although not affiliated with the traditional power barons, benefited from his munificence.

Conducting a hectic campaign to build up support through intermediaries and on the telephone, Antulay had staked his claim to the post. His supporters, voluble in their praise of the strength and resourcefulness of their leader, argued that the ex-chief minister had been punished enough for his "errors" and now deserved to be reinstated. But the wily leader maintained his outwardly low-profile stance, refusing to comment on his own candidature. "As I have publicly declared", he said, "whosoever is nominated by her to head the Government will not only be acceptable to me, but I shall extend him the fullest support and give him the best cooperation in the interest of the state and the Congress(I)."

Meanwhile, with the impasse wearing on for want of a final decision by Mrs Gandhi, opposition parties in Maharashtra made capital of the situation. Leaders of the Janata Party and Bharatiya Janata Party in the state last fortnight appealed separately to Maharashtra Governor Idris Latif to dissolve the Assembly and call fresh elections. Sharad Pawar's Congress(S) in an earlier effort had made a public call for dissolution of the Assembly. Determined to use the advantage gained in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka to unseat the Congress(I) in Maharashtra, leaders of the Opposition used the Bhosale issue as a whipping post to get their way.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

SADANAND MENON

A Harijan victim of arson: politicised tragedy

ANDHRA PRADESH

Brutal Reprisal

HARIJAN slayings have tragically become all too common in rural India. But the gruesome thing about the killings in Padirikuppam village is that it took place on polling day in Andhra Pradesh and it was a savage retaliation on the Harijans of the village for committing the crime of exercising their franchise.

The truth of the incident is now buried beneath a welter of political propaganda. Practically everyone is spouting a version designed to favour either of the two political parties. Only a few facts can be stated with any certainty. On January 5 a group of men entered Padirikuppam, poured petrol over the 40 thatched huts of the village and set fire to them. When the blaze was over nearly all the 300 residents of the village were homeless. Four people are said to have died in the carnage but only one person—a lame 35-year-old Harijan woman, Thingamma, has been identified for certain.

Many Controversies: There is a dispute about the identities of the other three bodies found, since they were charred beyond recognition. Some say that they are also inhabitants of the village but other stories doing the rounds identify them as Murali a 28-year-old Brahmin, Nanda Gopal Reddy and Radhakrishnayya, who are all from surrounding towns and villages.

Many explanations are offered as to how these three could have got to Padirikuppam. The story goes that a group of Congress(I) workers attacked a rice mill belonging to the nephew of the local T Desam candidate Gopal Raju. On hear the attack, a lorry-load of Telugu D workers sallied out to join battle with Some say that the Telugu Desam men ked the village. Others say that the groups clashed and the three men whisked away by Congress(I) workers puzzling feature was that the four were cremated without a post mortem

Whatever the real truth, the Congr has been quick to extract political m from the atrocity. In next to no time Congress(I) workers were swarming al the village. With callous disregard fo welfare of the villagers they persuade villagers that Mrs Gandhi would be co to see their miseries and they shoul accept the state Government's offers build their houses until she did.

In the event Mrs Gandhi did not se to visit Padirikuppam. The only repr tative of the Central Government who turned up on January 21 was Union Mi of State for Home P. Venkatasubbiah was accompanied by the former chief m ter K. Vijayabhaskara Reddy and All Congress(I) Committee General Secre M. Satyanarayana Rao. Venkatasub listened patiently to complaints Narayanaswamy a local Harijan leader claimed that the Scheduled Castes were harassed by the state Government and police. On hearing this Venkatasubb said to have remarked ominously: Centre will take appropriate action if th dereliction of duty on the part of a government. The Union Government special responsibility to protect Harij

Muted Reaction: The Telugu Desa its part has not chosen to react strong the incident. Perhaps this is partly becau knows that it is not very popular with Harijans. But whether they draw their

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from the upper castes or not, N.T. Rao was the first VIP on the scene. Reporters say that he was appalled by the gory coloured stories he heard there. The Congress(I) has, however, pounced on this and claim that he did not care to talk to the villagers. Rama Rao denies this saying: "I went there only to see and talked only with them. I request all to make irresponsible statements in this matter." He ordered a judicial inquiry to be conducted by retired Andhra Pradesh High Court Judge Y. Venkateswara Rao.

Now as time goes by, the Harijans have relented from their earlier stand and are allowing the state Government to rebuild the village. The Government is also seeing to it that each family gets one hut each so instead of the 40 huts that were burnt down Padirikuppam will now have 86 huts. Some land may have to be acquired in the village to build the huts. Says the local Revenue Divisional Officer C.S.R. Murthy: "The completion of construction of all the huts may take over a month."

Till then the villagers are living in nearby villages. Most still believe that Telugu Desam workers are responsible for the carnage. Says a middle-aged villager, Ponnuswami: "Telugu Desam workers attacked the village in the knowledge that the entire Harijan colony voted en masse for Indiramma's Congress." He adds: "It is the common belief that Harijans vote for the Indira Congress." Whether this is true or not remains to be established but Padirikuppam is an explosive testimony to what can happen when caste and politics mix.

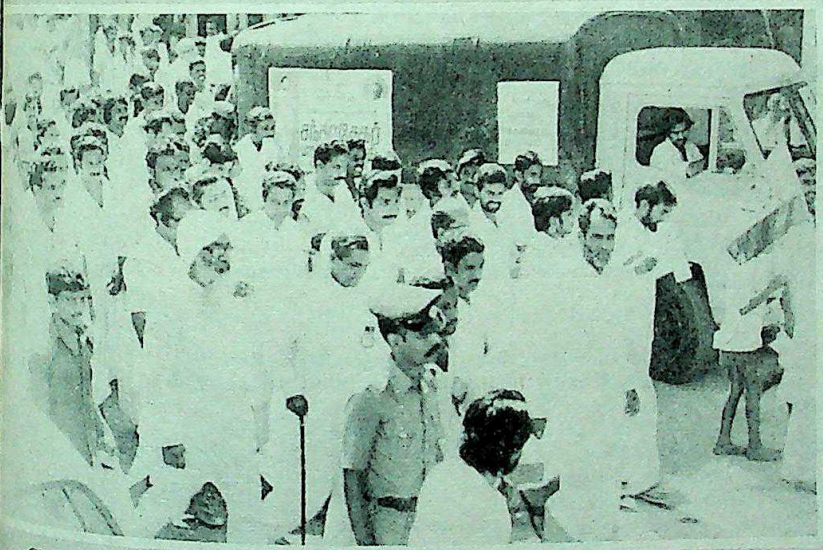
—S.H. VENKATRAMANI in Padirikuppam

CHANDRA SHEKHAR

Marathon Man

WITH clockwork precision Janata Party President Chandra Shekhar, 56, started his much-discussed Bharat Yatra on January 6, 1983—the same day that his party was swept to power in Karnataka. Starting off from Kanyakumari, Chandra Shekhar and his entourage of various Janata leaders from different states plan to finish their fantastic odyssey at Rajghat in New Delhi by the middle of June 1983. Chandra Shekhar's padayatra is unique in many aspects. He will be the first politician in modern times to walk from Kanyakumari to New Delhi and do it in a record six months as against the eight years it took social crusader Acharya Vinoba Bhave.

With the euphoria of his party's recent victory in Karnataka still high, Chandra Shekhar has been receiving tumultuous receptions throughout Kerala. Thousands of people in the villages flock to hear him blasting Mrs Gandhi and her policies. Last week he got a bigger splash in the media when Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde and his colleagues flew from Bangalore to Trivandrum and motored down to Attingal in Trivandrum district where Chandra Shekhar was camping for the day. Hegde and his ministers were blessed by Chandra Shekhar and flew back the next day. Not to be outdone S. Bangarappa, the sulking Janata-Ranga leader flew down to Cochin a few days later and met Chandra Shekhar at Mavelikkara in Alleppey district for reconciliatory talks. All this has given a big boost to the Janata Party in Kerala.



Chandra Shekhar entering Trivandrum with his supporters: making waves

Sharp Retorts: Chandra Shekhar, however, stressed that he should not be identified with Gandhi or JP and said: "Basically I am a politician on a crusade to awaken the people about the attempts to introduce authoritarianism and dynastic rule in a surreptitious manner. Asked about his party's victory in Karnataka Chandra Shekhar replied: "It is a temporary boost for the Janata Party workers." Regarding the vexing Bangarappa problem he said: "It will be amicably settled as soon as I reach Bangalore." About Subramaniam Swamy's recent outburst against Hegde and others an angry Chandra Shekhar stated: "He has become the unofficial ambassador for Mrs Gandhi. It is better that he leaves the Janata Party."

Chandra Shekhar has some blisters on his feet after walking for nearly 400 km in the last fortnight. When the blisters subsided the pain from cramps persisted. He wears leather slippers and covers an average 25 km a day. The padayatra begins early in the morning at 8. The first session ends by 11.30 a.m. and this is followed by rest, lunch and a siesta. Back on the road by 4 p.m. he keeps going until 7 p.m.

The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) in Kerala has given strict instructions to all its units spread over the state to give all necessary help and arrange receptions for Chandra Shekhar. During the Kerala stretch of his padayatra Chandra Shekhar, who used to eat chicken before, has become pure vegetarian. Though he finds Kerala food very hot, he says the idlis, dosas and coconut chutney are delicious.

Every fortnight there will be a temporary break in the padayatra for Chandra Shekhar to fly down to Delhi for pressing party and organisational work but he will return within three days to resume his marathon march to Delhi. Chandra Shekhar said: "The brief rest will also enable other men in the padayatra to recoup their energy and make it to Delhi by June." Meanwhile Shekhar, the marathon man who has miles to go before he can rest, has become the envy of all political leaders in the state.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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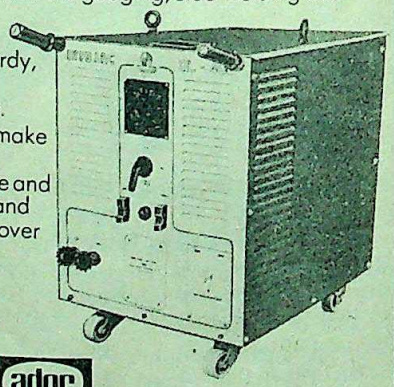

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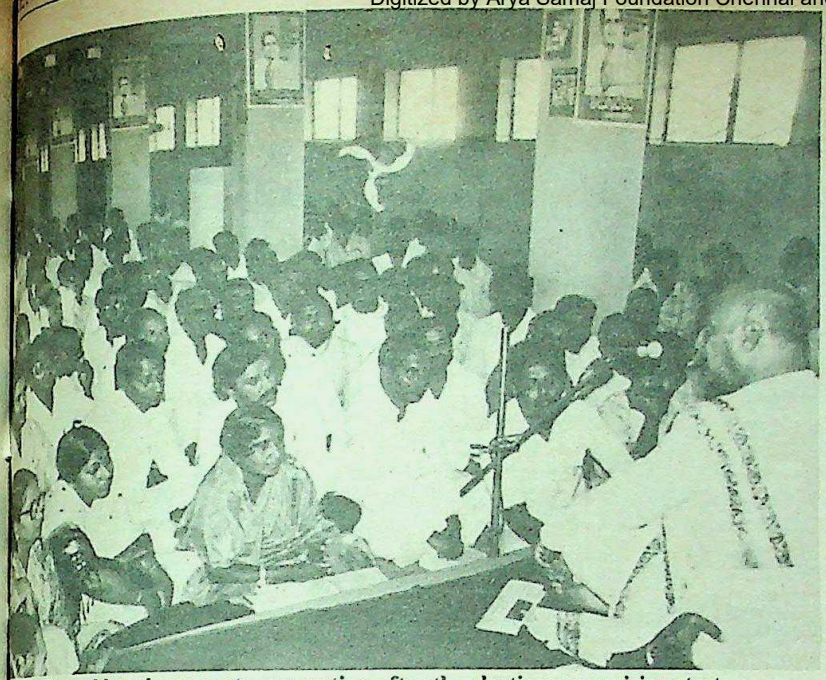

Rama Rao addressing a party convention after the elections: promising start

PRADESH

tting A Brisk Pace

THE NEW Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao is a man in a hurry. Unlike his slow-footed predecessors he has plunged into his new job at a brisk run. Less than a after his Telugu Desam party's at the polls, Rama Rao formed a 15-member ministry, summoned ature, made the first major policy t, called a convention of party- got down to business like an old the game of state craft. More than e else, since he took office on 9, Rama Rao has been concerned hing through the populist mea- promised: a free midday meal for ldren and selling rice at Rs 2 a kg oor.

he first policy statement—presen- he address by the state Governor raham to the first sitting of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative As- on January 18—the Telugu Desam ent pledged to give Telugu pride in administration, abolish capi- ces as well as many government ions and boards and delegate wers to the panchayat samitis and shads. A separate university for is to be started and laws made to daughters to get an equal share in property. The Government also plans to work towards ensuring greater autonomy to the state. To further this aim a committee is to be appointed to go into the question of Centre-state relations and suggest a constitutional amendment.

Administrative Changes: The effect of Rama Rao's Government on the state administration has been instant. Officers in various departments have been asked to speed up paperwork and keep a low profile. There have been no felicitation ceremonies like the ones Congress(I) ministers encouraged after the conclusion of elaborate ministry-making exercises. But far from creating hostility the new Government has raised expectations and made for cooperation. In Bhimavaram, a tea-shop slashed prices by five paise a tumbler as NTR, the name by which the chief minister is affectionately known, has promised to reduce prices.

To improve efficiency of the staff the entry of visitors to the secretariat is being restricted and counters opened for each district so that those coming from different parts of the state can have their problems sorted out speedily. The secretariat staff moving out of their seats will have to record where they are going in a special register and the canteens are to be opened only during lunch. Says an enthused clerk, G. Sudaramaiah: "The dead wood that cannot work should be removed or else we juniors will continue to rot without promotions."

The winds of change are also sweeping through the state legislature. The ministers are being reorganised to function on the Central Government pattern with a special assistant of deputy secretary rank assisting each minister and an informal committee of legislators to review and recommend changes in policies and programmes. Attitudes too are changing. The traditional khadi kurta-dhoti is being replaced by coloured shirts and trousers. At least 190 members in the 294-seat Assembly have been elected for the first time. Unlike members of the earlier Assembly many of them have begun using the legislature library. Says a special secretary of the legislative Assembly secretariat: "There are more good speakers and the level of debates has risen to higher levels than in the past."

But the rawness of several Telugu Desam members has led to some amusing incidents. Some newcomers, unaware of traditions, stood up as the governor read the address on seeing Congress(I) members standing. The Congressmen were protesting the Government's handling of the Padirikuppam incident in which five persons died after a clash between Congress(I) and Telugu Desam workers.

Defections: However, the first embarrassment for the chief minister came at the party convention on January 22 where members vehemently protested against any influx from the Congress(I). Explained Rama Rao: "I am against nepotism but if a large group from a district wants to join we should consider it." The chief minister's son-in-law and former Congress(I) minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, though defeated by the Telugu Desam candidate, is among those knocking at the door. Explained Naidu: "The Congress(I) has become a laughing stock. I lost even after visiting the constituency once every 10 days. My followers feel we should join the Telugu Desam party and so I have to agree. But I am not aspiring for office."

In spite of the objections of many partymen, including Venkatarama Naidu who defeated Chandrababu Naidu, as many as 11 of 15 legislators from that district issued a statement welcoming Chandrababu Naidu to the party. Some fear that this may lead to mass migration from parties like the Lok Dal which have been disbanded in the state. Confessed a senior Telugu Desam member: "We have to take into account the opinion of those belonging to the district and it is their recommendations which are reviewed by the screening committee before admitting those coming from other parties."

These arbitrary decisions are likely to

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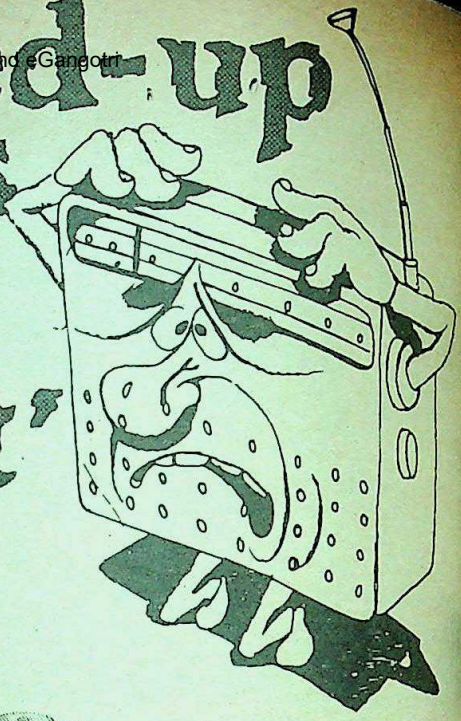

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...ne until the party organisation is ...shed and elections are completed for ...bers from the village committees to ...state central committee by March 29, ...party's first anniversary. For the ...ent a steering committee has been constituted though the men who are calling the shots are a handful (see box). Says the party treasurer T. Prakasa Rao: "We now have about 4 lakh members in 5,000 villages. We want to take the membership strength to 1 crore by covering 20,000 villages before NTR's birthday in May." The numbers in which the Congress(I) members seem willing to defect to the Telugu Desam will make Prakasa Rao's target easy to achieve.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

RAMA RAO MINISTRY

The New Cast

WITH ALL eyes on the NTR ...ministry and its future performance, ...ch will depend on his supporting cast. ...low are thumbnail sketches of some of ...key ministerial aides:

Nadendla Bhaskara Rao, 47, is a man of driving ambition, who has aspired to head the state unit of the Congress(I) since 1980. Failing that, he now occupies second position in the Telugu Desam of which he ...s one of the founders last March. ...e first to quit the legislative Assem...y, he has been one of N.T. Rama Rao's ...est advisers and has helped in the ...ction of party nominees.

A lawyer before he was inducted ...o politics by former chief minister ...Channa Reddy in 1978, Bhaskara ...o was made minister for commercial ...es, excise and legislative affairs. But ...anna Reddy stripped him of these ...y portfolios once he realised that ...haskara Rao was projecting himself as ...possible successor. He was then given ...e more obscure charge of weights and ...easures, archives and archaeology. At ...s time he became a frequent visitor ...New Delhi to visit Sanjay Gandhi ...d even sent 20,000 posters to Amethi ...the 1980 Lok Sabha elections. ...ving succeeded with the dissident ...mpaign against Channa Reddy, ...haskara Rao was made minister for ...griculture in the T. Anjiah ministry in ...980. Like Channa Reddy, Anjiah too ...ubted his loyalty and dropped him. ...s is minister for finance and commer...l taxes in the Rama Rao Ministry ...d is second only to the chief minister.

Nallapureddi Srinivasulu Reddi, 49, graduated in law and entered politics 25 years ago. Elected to the Assembly as an independent, he earned a reputation for conscientiousness by not missing a ...y of the proceedings. In 1978 he contested and won on a Congress(I) ticket and later led the dissident campaign against Channa Reddy. During Anjiah's mammoth Cabinet expansion he was made minister for transport but was shifted to the State Road Transport Corporation when the former chief minister was instructed to cut down the number of ministers. Reddi quit the Congress(I) in October last year. As the most prominent Reddi in the Telugu Desam, he is important for diluting the party's image as a Kamma preserve. He has also endeared himself to Rama Rao with his integrity and is the only person apart from Bhaskara Rao to advise the chief minister on policy matters. Reddi has been given irrigation and public works portfolio.

Parvatenni Upendra, 46, is a post-graduate in English literature and worked with the now defunct Madras eveninger *The Mail* before joining the railways as a public relations officer. After working as special secretary for former railway minister Madhu Dandavate he became director for public relations for the Railway Board. Quitting his job last September. Upendra joined the Telugu Desam and assisted Rama Rao in planning the campaign and selecting candidates. As the chief minister's confidential aide he will also be expected to liaise with the Centre and the state administration. He has already made changes like the introduction of informal consultative committees of legislators to each ministry and the system of special assistants to counsel in decision-making in each ministry. Having stayed out of the Assembly elections, Upendra will contest the February by-election from Hyderabad's Himayatnagar constituency.

Karuthuri Venkata Satyanarayana, 53, is a post-graduate in farm economics and has taught at Andhra University for eight years before switching to farming. In 1974 he became JP's torch-bearer in the state and was later associated with the Janata Party and subsequently the Lok Dal. Of his latest move, Satyanarayana says: "I was against Indira Gandhi's policies and disgusted with other parties." As the chief organiser of the party he was responsible for determining what influences voting and choosing the most appropriate candidate. Satyanarayana plans to concentrate on organisation building and his most immediate job as convenor of the steering committee is to ensure that elections to all party posts are done by March.

Yellamanchi Sekhar, 39, is a post-graduate in political science and besides writing novels has worked for several Telugu dailies including *Eenadu* where he was the first chief reporter. Sekhar joined Rama Rao's party in March and says of his decision: "I joined the Telugu Desam as NTR was laying the permanent foundation for the unity of all Telugus. He has helped foil any fresh attempt to divide the state and has contributed to the emotional integration of the Telugu-speaking people." Throughout the campaign, Sekhar drafted speeches and statements apart from helping out with the selection of candidates. His future role in the party, besides being in charge of media planning and public relations, is not clear.

Tatenni Prakasa Rao, 58, is a former communist and an activist in the India People's Theatre Association. He has been a Madras-based producer of Telugu, Tamil and Hindi films. Though he joined the party after the elections, Prakasa Rao has known the chief minister since 1947 when they met on the sets of a L.V. Prasad film. Speaking on his new role as treasurer of the party, he said: "It is never difficult to find money for a good cause. With more than 125 Telugu films made every year we can get producers to advertise in a party weekly we plan to start and contribute directly for various welfare programmes." Prakasa Rao is the only party member besides Rama Rao to be a Telugu Desam office-bearer.

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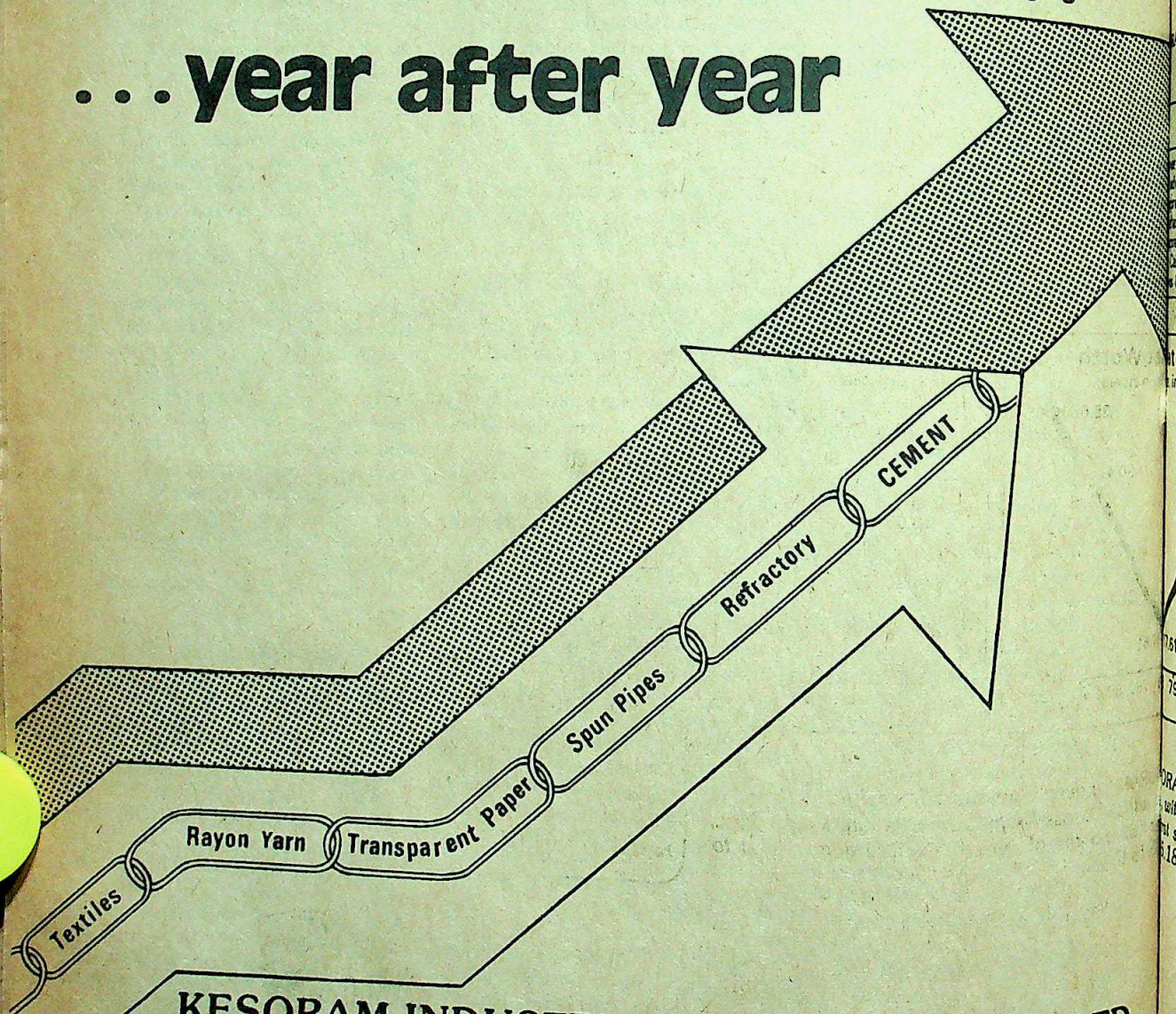

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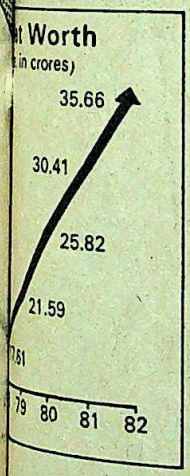
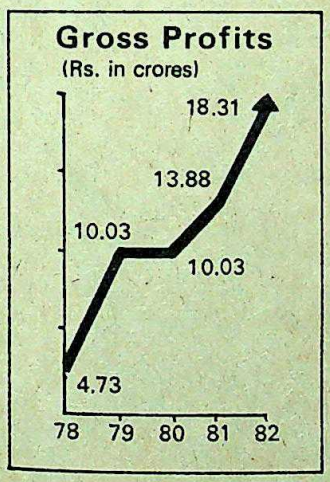
...s & Surplus	9.66	27.71	187%





...ORAM's growth continues, and at a much faster ... with the Gross Profit, as per audited statement, ...st six months of current year surging ahead to ...8.18 Crores.

Highlights

- ★ **Face Value :** Debentures of Rs.100 (Comprising of Part 'A' of Rs.10 and Part 'B' of Rs.90)
- ★ **Phased Investment :** Rs.50 payable on application and Rs.50 by 30th June, 1983.
- ★ **Capital Appreciation :** On redemption of Part 'A'—Allotment of one Equity Share of Rs.10 at PAR; Market Price Rs.65 (on 3.1.1983).
- ★ **Early allotment of Equity Share :** On 30.9.1983. In just three months from the date debentures are fully paid up.
- ★ **Interest :** Right from next day following closure of subscription list.
- ★ **Secured**
- ★ **Easy Liquidity :** To be listed on Stock Exchanges at Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay.
- ★ **Scrip in two parts :** Both will be traded separately.

Return on redemption of Part 'A' as on 30.9.1983

Average Investment in one Debenture (Rs.50 for 8 months and Rs.50 for 3 months)	Rs.68.75
Profit on equity allotment—Difference between the market price of Rs.65 (on 3.1.83) and allotment price of Rs.10	Rs.55.00
Plus Interest at 13.5% on Rs.50 for 8 months and on Rs.50 for 3 months.	Rs. 6.00
Total earnings	Rs.61.00
Return in just eight months	**89%**

Recurring return till redemption of Part 'B'

Debenture Price	Rs.100.00
Amount received on sale of one Equity Share	Rs. 65.00
Net Investment per Debenture on 30.9.1983	Rs. 35.00
Interest receivable every year on balance Rs.90 at 13.5%	Rs. 12.15
Recurring Annual Return	**34.7%**

Managers to the Issue
STATE BANK OF INDIA
Merchant Banking Division

Advisers to the Issue
Lodha & Co.
Calcutta-700 001

Public Issue of Rs.4.35 crores opens on 9th February 1983

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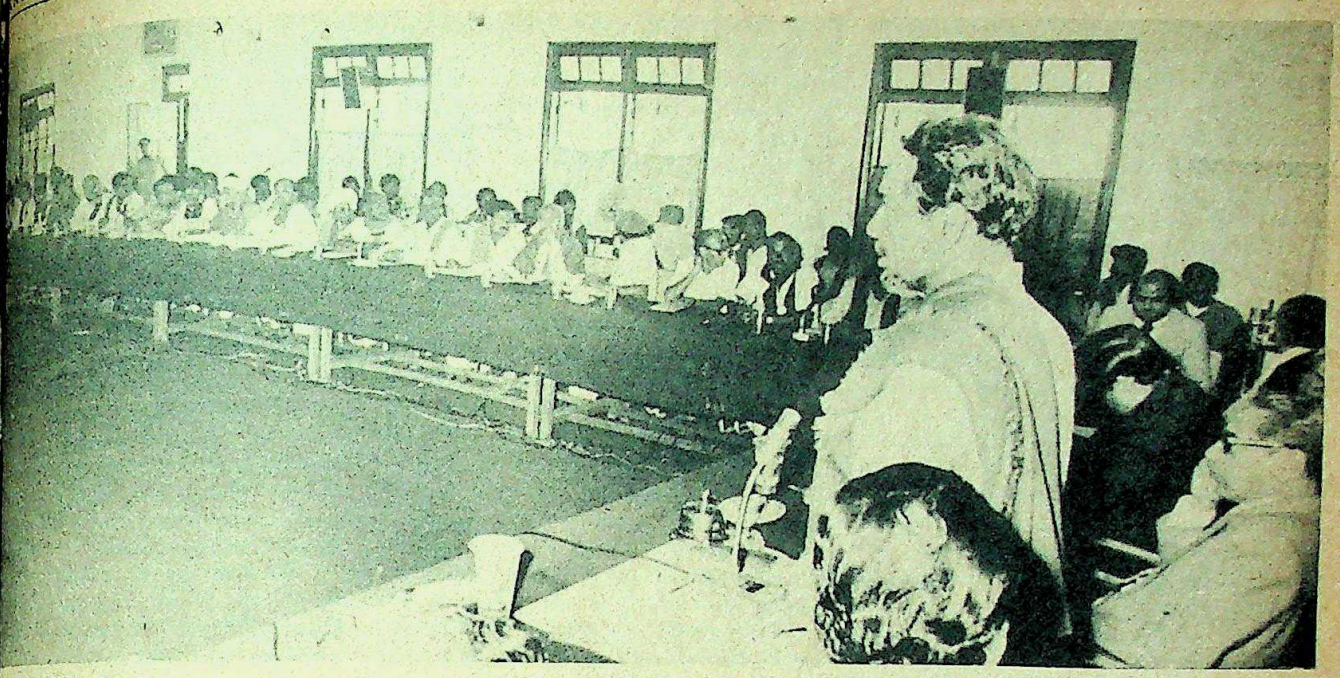

Hegde (standing) addressing members of a farmers' association: getting down to business

ATAKA

Fresh Approach

EVEN as the Janata Government moved into the portals of Vidhana Soudha in Bangalore, hardly a fortnight after the party's surprise victory over the Congress(I) in Karnataka, the ember ministry headed by Chief r Ramakrishna Hegde, busied es in projecting a new brand of stration. It was designed not only vide a vivid contrast to Gundu hree-year stint but also to wipe out ear left by the initial leadership in the party that resulted in the k S. Bangarappa staying out of the t for the moment.

hile Bangarappa rushed to Trivan- eeking commiseration from Janata President Chandra Shekhar on the p of his padayatra of India, Hegde s clutch of ministers made a flurry ouncements to show that they business. Last week, Hegde had a our discussion with the Shimoga- Karnataka Ryotha Sangha, the association of agitating farmers. He to suspend recovery of loans from ers till a decision was taken soon r demand of writing off all their ac- ed loans and abolishing all taxes s them. As another sop, 20 cases farmers who had participated in rgund and Navalgund agitations in 1980 were withdrawn. Earlier, the Government held similar conciliatory talks with trade union leaders to get a grip on workers' problems, and assured them that the National Security Act would not be used against them or the farmers and students.

To meet its electoral promise of curbing rising prices, a three-member Cabinet subcommittee was instituted to suggest measures. The Government took a hard decision of introducing a 50 per cent power cut on industries using high tension power and placed a ceiling limit on power to other industries. Karnataka already faces a power shortage of 10 to 33 per cent in the various sectors. Meanwhile Rural Development Minister Nazir Sab held discussions with Central officials in New Delhi to ease the water shortage in 1,860 villages in 14 of the 20 districts of the state which were badly hit by drought last year.

Bangarappa: sulking in the wings

Firm Stance: In a veiled rebuke to Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran's election campaign for Gundu Rao, the Government turned down Tamil Nadu's request for more Cauvery water to the Thanjavur district to irrigate its crops. Hegde was equally firm with Maharashtra Chief Minister B. A. Bhosale when the border dispute over Belgaum was broached and said the state would abide by the Mahajan Commission Report which acceded the district to Karnataka.

In an open attack on the luxurious life-style that the Gundu Rao ministry practised, the Cabinet decided that all red blinkers on ministers' cars would be removed and there would be no special police escort. The restrictions imposed by Rao for entry to the Vidhana Soudha by the public were removed for two weeks, but were reintroduced when the new Government found the crowds uncontrollable. Following the example of Hegde, who has declined to move into the official residence of the chief minister, Law Minister A. Lakshmisagar said he would stay in his old house where he pays a rent of Rs 100 and refused to have a police guard. The state helicopter is to be used only for natural calamities. Last week when Hegde was to attend a meeting in Chitradurga district, he went by car, and returned by train. Ministers were also advised not to attend any felicitation functions, an action clearly directed at mocking Rao's felicitation spree after coming to power.

Although the Janata Government ass-

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ured the Congress(I) that it had no intentions of "witch-hunting", it announced that it would immediately take action on guilty officers who were indicted by the two commissions enquiring into the liquor tragedy in July 1981 that killed more than 300 people and the circus fire in February 1981 which resulted in 80 deaths. To minimise administrative corruption a Lok Ayukta bill was to be introduced shortly in the legislature which would cover even the chief minister. To protect its brittle majority in the state assembly the Government decided to introduce an anti-defection bill. The Janata Party, with the help of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the communist parties and 14 independents has 20 more than the required 113 needed for an absolute majority in the 224-member lower house. Said Hegde: "Karnataka is to be a ground for experiment of all ideas of electoral reforms."

But even after two weeks the party could not come to terms with Bangarappa who has been maintaining a sullen silence. Hegde's Cabinet colleagues are dead set against Bangarappa becoming the deputy chief minister since Bangarappa's followers have been reduced to a mere four legislators and he is in no position to dictate terms to the Government. Bangarappa has remained adamant and maintains that the Kranti Ranga has still not merged with the Janata Party since it lacks the party's sanction although the parliamentary board had taken a decision to this effect. Hegde has cleverly inducted Nazir Sab, the Ranga president, into his Cabinet along with two other Ranga members including Chandraprabha Urs, daughter of the late Devraj Urs, the founder of the party.

Moily: watching for weaknesses

Bangarappa is now isolated and knows that his position is weak but he cannot come around with losing face. Hegde maint that the number two pos still vacant for Bangara until his Cabinet expansio February. Both are how under pressure from all ters of the party to reach understanding and pres unity. But Bangarappa s to be playing a waiting g and during the one-day embly session on January he deliberately sat in the seat in the ruling party benches from all the party leaders. Howev confidante of his reaffirmed that whi still has chances of becoming deputy minister, he will certainly not accep number two position.

To counter any charges of neglec backward classes that Bangarappa rake up, Hegde has made sure that his binet has a decided tilt towards these

RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE

Man Of The Moment

AT EXACTLY nine every morning a coffee brown Ambassador noses its way inconspicuously through the unhurried streets of Bangalore city and heads sedately to Vidhana Soudha, seat of the Karnataka Government. Seated inside, a dark grey shawl flung carelessly over his light brown khadi kurta, is the state's most powerful man—Ramakrishna Hegde, Karnataka's tenth chief minister.

The car is devoid of a wireless set and even a red blinker. No siren-wailing escort vehicle with a string of gun-toting policemen tags behind it. At the Vidhana Soudha, Hegde opens the car door himself and folds his hands in greeting to the security guard and the lift man. He strides into the empty corridors of the building which is deserted at this hour and enters room No. 323 on the third floor, the office of the chief minister.

As occupant of the state's top public job, Hegde strikes a marked contrast to the previous incumbent, the flamboyant Gundu Rao. Except for the Dunhill cigarettes he puffs, he is simplicity personified. He has refused to move into the official residence of the chief minister and sent Gundu Rao's Mercedes Benz packing to the garage.

Sporting a scraggly grey beard which he grew in jail during the Emergency and never shaved afterwards, Hegde explains himself in a low, rumbling voice: "One's life suddenly doesn't become more precious when one is the chief minister. I don't want to have any artificial barrier between the people and me.

MUSHTAQ AHMED

Hegde: low-key presence

I am against exhibition of authority. I meet as many people as I can because I believe that unless I try to understand others, I can't expect others to understand me. And even if I can't solve their problems immediately the least I can do is listen to them. It's not a kind of hypocrisy, nor is it a facade. I genuinely believe in it."

Some old Hegde watchers remember the new chief minister as the haughty impatient young man, proc to a luxurious life-style over a decade ago when his detractors called him the state's "playboy". He was minister in several Congress governments from 1957 onwards to 1971 and in his las term was virtually the *de facto* chief mi nister in the Veerendra Patil ministry Twelve years out of power, 14 month in jail, an ignominious defeat in the 1977 Lok Sabha polls, a stint as genera secretary of the Janata Party and a gnawing stomach ulcer have change Hegde so dramatically that his colle gue, M. Raghupathy, a former Kran Ranga leader and his bitter critic in the late '60s, asks wonderingly: "Is this the same Hegde? He is transformed man." At 56, his hairline receding swiftly and lines of tiredness semicircling his pon ched eyes, Hegde has mellowed into an amiable leader. But inside the velvet glove, the iron fist has not corroded.

Confident Outlook: Hegde is aware that the Government he heads is unlik the previous stints he had as minister when the Congress usually had a brow majority. Yet in spite of his brittle ma jority Hegde quietly maintains: "I am confident we will complete our full term in the Government. I do not envi sage any friction or conflict. Any diffe rences could be sorted out." In suppo he argues with conviction that "neither the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) no the communists or independents wou like a situation to develop where the Congress(I) can on the slightest pretex

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Out of the seven ministers, only two to the dominant communities, the ats and the Vokkaligas. Hegde o expand his Cabinet within the ortnight and he is likely to add 14 with at least half of them belonging backward classes and minorities. Government is planning a series of es to raise the standard of living of eaker sections. It has already anced that it would implement the recendations of the state Scheduled and Tribes Commission that has ested ameliorative measures and also ged a protection of civil rights bill. so, in this election, Urs's formula of ing this class to the detriment of o major communities has been un- This may be the beginning of the ergence of the Vokkaligas and the ats as the two most dominant poli- forces in the state.

Strategic Gambit: The Congress(I) had been watching the tussle between Hegde and Bangarappa with apparent glee, has strategically decided to nominate Veerappa Moily as the leader of the 81-strong legislature party. Moily belongs to the backward Devadega community and the Congress(I) is keen on harnessing the support of all the weaker sections by this move. In true Congress(I) fashion, the legislature party left the choice of a leader to Mrs Gandhi, although there was initially a tussle between former ministers H.C. Srikantiah and Bheemananda Khandre and former speakers K.H. Ranganath and K.S. Nagarathamma. Moily's appointment also signifies that the high command has decided that the Gundu Rao and F.M. Khan clique will not play such an important part in state politics anymore. When they were in the Cabinet together, Moily and Rao were arch rivals and finally fell out during the election. The high command also plans to unseat K. Mallanna, the acting Pradesh Congress Committee(I) president and appoint someone from the major communities in his place. Said Moily: "Our strategy would be to allow the Government to function and meanwhile build up our party. The Janata Government will crumble under the weight of its own inefficiency."

In a bid to consolidate its position, the Janata Government has announced that it will hold elections to the five city corporations and 90 municipalities by May this year. Elections for the village panchayats, taluk boards and co-operatives are also being planned. If the Janata is able to capture a majority of these corporations and boards, it will not only be able to strengthen its lower party ranks but could end both the Congress(I)'s threat of toppling the Government at will and cut Bangarappa to size if he does not join the Cabinet. Right now, the Janata Party is full of vigour. Said Hegde: "I am confident we will complete our full term in the Government."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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The true test of Hegde's ability will come when he starts distributing power and balancing the interests of the diverse groups. Says he: "It (the Cabinet) will not be as big as Anjiah's. But we cannot manage with the present eight ministers. My Cabinet will be a mixture of talent and just representation to various interests." He parries Rao's dig that the Janata Government will be an unlimited drama troupe and says, "Yes. We are not limited. Every citizen of Karnataka is a shareholder. It is a Janata government."

Setting the tone of the new Government, Hegde plans to introduce an anti-corruption (Lok Ayukta) and anti-defection bill. Says he: "Defection and corruption live and breed together. If there is political corruption, there is bound to be administrative corruption too. Unless the rulers set an example, they have no moral authority to take action against the administrative machinery."

Personal Attention: A personalised attitude to the state's problems is making itself evident. Making amends for the absence of a continuous channel of communication with the previous government, Hegde has assured the agitating farmers of relief in this year's budget and stayed the collection of their loan dues. Says he: "I am going to give the farmers their due not only in terms of economic relief but also in status and recognition."

On the burning issue of unemployment, with employment exchange registers showing 6.79 lakh jobless last fortnight, Hegde plans to re-introduce the concept of land army which he had earlier mooted as finance minister in 1969. The original scheme, corrupted by Devraj Urs into a government corporation, envisaged a land army in every taluk to undertake civil work on contract. Admitting ruefully that the exchange "is a bed of corruption", Hegde intends a computerisation of the employment register and regular publication of the list to obviate queue jumping.

"The people have given us a second chance. If we fail, we will be utterly disillusioned. If we succeed, it will be a complete change-over in the Centre too."

The delicate language issue, however, has seen Hegde qualifying the unanimous consensus of the previous government and opposition to make Kannada the sole first language in the education syllabi. Says he: "I believe that administration must be conducted in the language of the state so that people have an opportunity to understand and participate in the Government. But the problem is that there are linguistic minorities. There are certain guarantees in the Constitution (for them) and we must protect those." But his action will depend on the decision of the high court currently inquiring into the issue.

Last Chance: Dismissing fears of "stepmotherly" treatment of the state Government by the Centre Hegde is wary of forming a front of non-Congress(I) governments. Says he dismissingly: "I do not want to create any front which would smack as anti-Centre. Anti-Centre might be anti-national." What lies uppermost in Hegde's mind is that this could be the Janata's last chance in the country if things do not work out. He remarks sombrely: "The people have given us a second chance. If we fail, we will be utterly disillusioned. If we succeed, it will be a complete change-over in the Centre too."

Right now, Hegde is weighed down with work. He gets up at 7a.m., has a breakfast of yoghurt sweetened with a little honey and heads to office where he stays put till at least nine in the night and goes to bed at 11p.m. Taking a load of files home, he comments exasperatedly: "Why can't we have 48 hours in a day instead of 24?"

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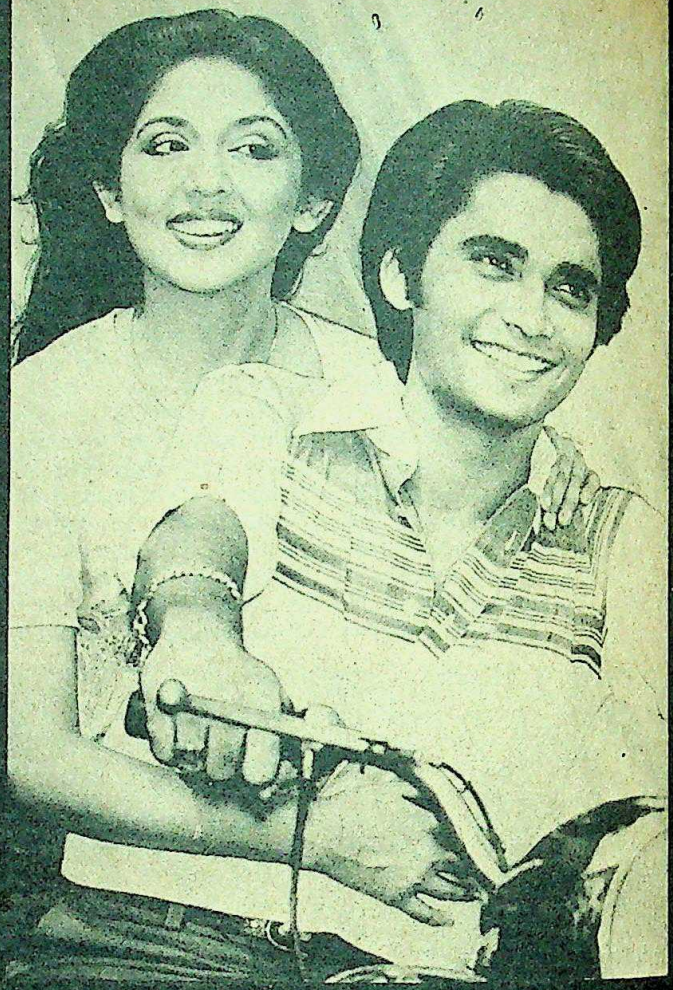

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KERALA

Crumbling Coalition

KERALA'S Congress(I)-led coalition has survived one crisis after another for the last six months. But today after Mrs Gandhi's southern debacle many parties are wondering whether it is worth their while to keep the coalition alive. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), the coalition's second-largest party with 14 members, for one, is feeling increasingly uncomfortable in the company of the Congress(I).

The elections put a heavy strain on IUML's relationship with the Congress(I). On one side of the border in Karnataka, the Congress(I) spurned election adjustments with the IUML, dubbing it as communal. The IUML was said to be so incensed that at one point it was considering sending its leader C.H. Mohammad Koya to campaign in South Kanara for IUML candidates in Karnataka.

Tactless Statement: In the wake of the election, Congress(I) leaders made matters worse by a series of tactless statements. Karnataka's vanquished chief minister R. Gundu Rao tried to shift some of the blame for losing by criticising the IUML for fielding candidates, and squarely blamed them for his defeat. Even Kerala Chief Minister K. Karunakaran, who is usually noted for his tact, chose this moment to launch a tirade against regional and communal parties. He was forced to beat a hasty retreat when he found himself under attack from different sides.

Koya: growing friction

But the elections have not been the only point of friction between the IUML and its senior partner in the coalition. Feelings have been running high ever since the Trivandrum riots and the police firing in Alleppey.

This was not the first open tiff between the IUML and its coalition partners. A few weeks earlier Kidangoor Gopalakrishna Pillai, the leader of the National Democratic Party (NDP), one of the constituents of the Front, had hit out at Koya over the reservation issue (*see* INDIA TODAY, January 15). His statement triggered off a war of words

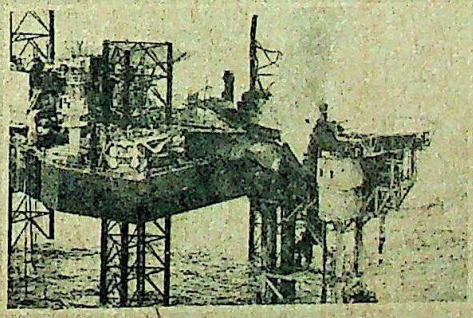
BOMBAY HIGH

Exposed Flank

LAST fortnight, six months after it became India's first major oilfield casualty, SJ5, which had gone up in flames along with the drilling rig Sagar Vikas, resumed operations. But for the Bombay High oil-well, resurrection also meant raking up a number of unanswered questions, foremost among them being the new theory quietly being circulated in intelligence circles that the Sagar Vikas blow-out could have been a case of sabotage. However, Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) officials and marine experts scoff at the theory.

What led them to examine the sabotage angle was the curious case of an Arab dhow that sank in the Bombay High area shortly after the Sagar Vikas blow-out. The survivors, who were picked up by one of ONGC's supply vessels, turned out to be five Pakistani nationals. Under interrogation, they said that they were all sailors who had boarded the dhow in Sharjah and were on their way to Penang after a stop at Karachi. What intrigued the intelligence officials was that the dhow was way off course if it was headed for Penang via Karachi and Sri Lanka—and in any event, the Bombay High zone is strictly off limits to foreign vessels. The Pakistanis claimed that they had drifted off course when their dhow's rudder broke, and the vessel finally sank just before they were picked up.

Indifferent Security: However, the interrogators also realised that it was possible that the dhow could have been deliberately sunk when the ONGC ship was sighted to remove all traces of damaging evidence and also to ensure that the survivors were picked up. The Pakistani crew stuck to their story and even ONGC officials gave them the benefit of the doubt. Said Dr A.K. Malhotra, member (off-shore) in ONGC: "There is no reason to suspect sabotage. All that has happened was just an unfortunate accident."



The Sagar Vikas blow-out: lax security

But even if Malhotra's contention is correct, it still exposes the fact that the security of the vital Bombay High installations is far from satisfactory. "If an ancient Arab dhow can calmly sail into the Bombay High area without being challenged or detected, what is to stop a more sophisticated and faster vessel from doing so?" questioned an ONGC official.

Vulnerability: In any event, the coastguard's limited resources are almost wholly concentrated on dealing with smugglers from the Gulf ports. But a glance at the records in the customs department in Bombay reveals that no less than four large dhows, ranging from 60 to 100 DWT (dead weight tonnes) have been intercepted in Bombay High waters in the past year. Two were registered in Panama (which could mean anything) while one sank (as described) before details could be ascertained.

Apart from the four foreign vessels, a total of 31 Indian boats were intercepted in Bombay High waters last year while committing an obvious breach of security. Even for fishing vessels, the Bombay High zone is clearly demarcated, and flares are lit at night at relevant points of the area to warn boats away. But because of the limited patrolling by the coastguard, the smugglers continue to use dumping sites barely a few miles away from Sagar Vikas.

It is obvious that the question of ensuring security, as far as Bombay High is concerned, has not been taken very seriously. For, according to current regulations, the navy can only take over the job in times of war; and it might take a more serious event than the Sagar Vikas mishap to force the authorities to sit up and take note.

—ASOKA RAINA

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the two leaders and Pillai even to the extent of saying that "the Prize should be given to mmad Koya for ignorance".

ite apart from this there are other to the IUML. Its top leadership is heavy pressure from within the community to reunite with the All Muslim League (AIML) which is now position. Both sides realise that it be to their advantage to come together but they differ over the terms. The still clings to the view that the ress(I) is, "the greatest danger to the s and the Muslim community". IUML leader P.M. Abubacker: "The attitudes remain unchanged. We split years ago on our attitude to the ress(I)."

With the rise of communal tension in te, the AIML is well-placed to score the IUML. Last fortnight the AIML or- ed a vehicle procession from rgod to Trivandrum, to press its de- s for protection of the minorities. vehicle *jatha* has been receiving a endous response along the way.

Alternative Coalition: Abubacker ad- frankly that any merger will bring the ry down. He claims that apart from and Industry Minister E. Ahammed, est of the IUML favours quitting the ion. Says Abubacker: "Of course the er would bring down the ministry. we can form an alternative anti- ress(I) front ministry."

If all these controversies were not en- the IUML has internal differences to nd with also. Seethi Haji, Koya's ri- hand man has been demanding the portfolio on the grounds that the e are anti-Muslim. He also openly his differences with Industry Minister mmed, who he feels spoiled his cha- of becoming a minister. Says Haji: mmed and others who are well- ated cannot stand an illiterate like me I acted as the one-man-army of the when we were in opposition."

Ahammed, who is said to be reluctant quit office and has now become a st- supporter of the Congress(I). mmad Koya also denies that he plans leave the ministry and says: "There is rovocation to leave the Front. At the ent we don't want to change horses midstream." But it is said that the rists have offered him the chief minis- ship. Whether Mohammad Koya de- s it would be better to change horses not remains to be seen, but there is doubt that the political scene in rala will remain in a state of flux for time to come.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

DMK

Tongue Lashing

DRAVIDA Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) chief M. Karunanidhi has never been one to shy away from controversy. Last fortnight he was back in the thick of battle once again to dispute a statement about the relationship between Tamil and Sanskrit. In his characteristically vitriolic and unrestrained style, Karunanidhi denounced Sanskrit as "a eunuch" and a "dead language".

Karunanidhi had been roused to wrath by an innocuous remark made by Swami Jayendra Saraswati the new Sankaracharya of the Kancheepuram Mutt, at a public meeting in Madras. The newly ordained swami had offered the view that, "there is no antipathy between Tamil and Sanskrit, the combined use of the two languages has been of good use to us (Tamilians)". He went on to draw upon a rather unfortunate analogy and added that, "as far as we are concerned, the two languages are our twin parents. If Tamil is our mother tongue, Sanskrit is our father tongue."

Karunanidhi: typical vitriolic style

Heated Controversy: In any other part of the country such a statement would barely have merited mention in the next day's papers. But in Tamil Nadu where language is the very stuff of politics this innocent observation was enough to stir a hornet's nest. Karunanidhi was quick to jump into the fray. Condemning what he saw as blasphemous thoughts, Karunanidhi loosed a string of invectives which left no room for doubt about his feelings on Sanskrit and Swami Jayendra. Developing on the Sankaracharya's analogy he said that, "Tamil could not have cohabited with that castrated Aryan language to spawn the five crore and odd Tamilians."

Alluding to the fact that the Kancheepuram Mutt is also known as Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam he ridiculed the hapless swami saying: "The heads of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam were unable to appreciate the need for fecundity and potency for the conception of an offspring. Such ignorance was in spite of the fact that the Kamakoti Mutt had 'kama' or desire or lust in its name itself."

Karunanidhi is known for his acerbic utterances but this once he had surpassed even the liberal bounds allowed to him. The Hindu faithful who have been cowed by years of the DMK's rationalism—which has in practice had a rather strong streak of anti-Brahminism—were stung by this open ridicule of one of Hinduism's respected and senior most leaders.

The man who finally stepped forward to defend the faith was S.V.S. Manian, a veteran Tamil journalist who edits a popular Tamil Weekly *Idhayam Pesukirathu* (The Heart Speaks). In a presumably heartfelt editorial, Manian warned Karunanidhi that he should, "hold his tongue or learn decency". Hindus, he thundered, would not take the DMK president's vulgar onslaughts lying down. To top off his blunt editorial Manian threw the DMK leader one final question—would he have dared to make a similar insulting reference to a Christian or a Muslim leader?

Defence: Manian's reaction was not provoked solely by Karunanidhi's speech. It was also partly the result of pent-up fury, at years of bias against Brahmins in Tamil Nadu. Says Manian: "If the DMK chaps wonder what the Brahmins have done for Tamil, I would like to retort that Brahmins remain unsurpassed in their contributions to the Tamil language, literature, and journalism. Even the DMK dailies depend on their readership and journalistic contributions on Brahmins."

The editorial volley caught DMK leaders offguard. Karunanidhi himself went as far as to concede, "that the Kanchi Sankaracharya is a great man, but we cannot be compelled to accept his tenets. In this case our sentiments were hurt by the view he expressed." From Karunanidhi this was restraint of a remarkable order. Other leaders were, however, quick to point out that the party has survived greater assault in the name of religion. A DMK MLA Durai Murugan offered the comment in the party eveninger *Ethiroli* that the "Kanchi Sankaracharya was only a fleabite for the Dravidian movement." But apart from the occasional provocative statement the controversy appears to be dying down, now that DMK has established that it is an effective keeper of the Dravidian conscience.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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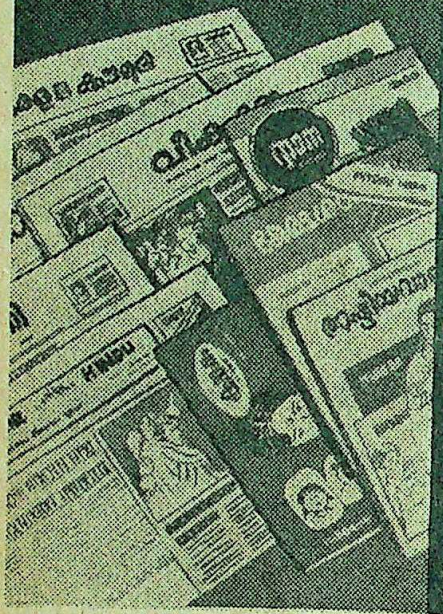

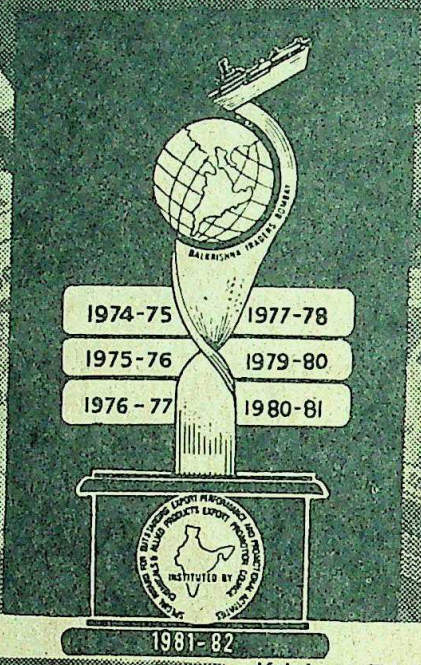

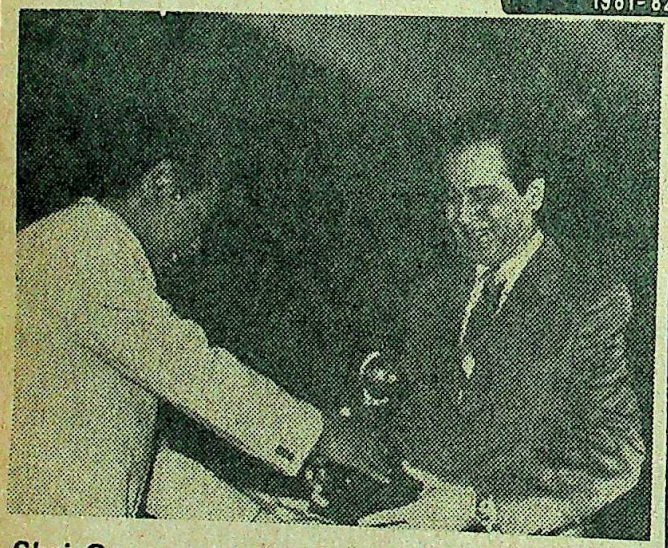

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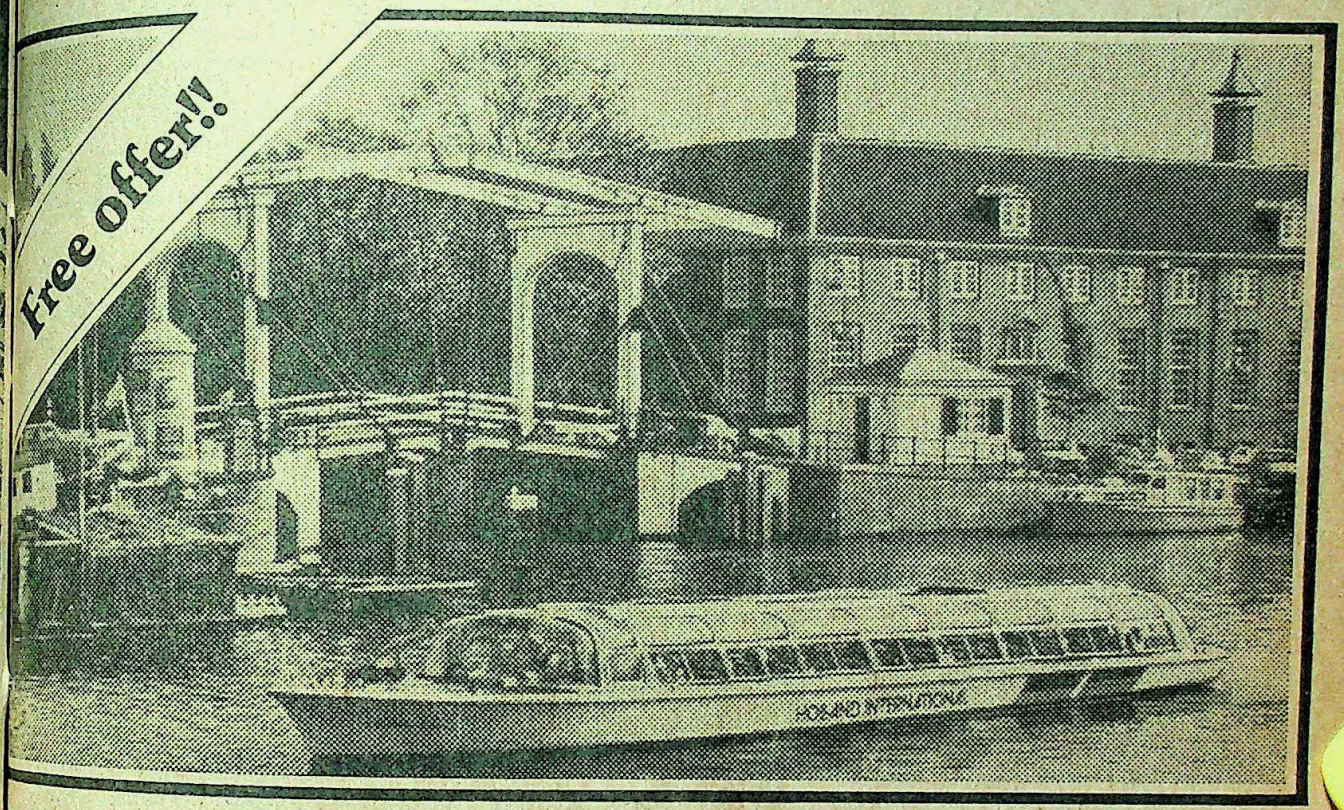

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"Zia Is The Terrorist"

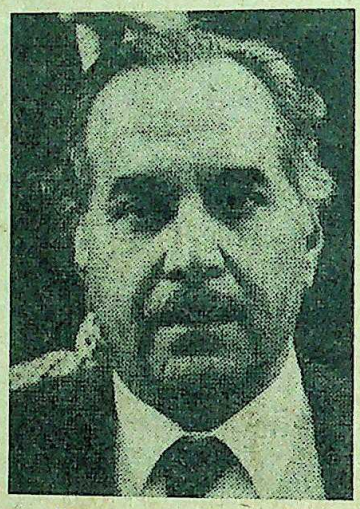
GENERAL Zia was not the only controversial figure to visit Washington last month. Also in town to accost—and whenever possible—to heckle the Punjabi generalissimo was another Punjabi politician: Ghulam Hussein. Hussein is the exiled general secretary of executed prime minister Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) now banned by Zia.

Hussein, now one of Nusrat Bhutto's most trusted lieutenants, timed his visit to the United States and Canada to coincide with that of General Zia, travelling extensively to campaign against Zia.

Hussein, a physician, received his MBBS from King Edward Medical College in Lahore in 1963 and ran his own clinic for several years before entering politics. In 1970 he was elected to the National Assembly as a PPP candidate from his home district in Jhelum and was made adviser to the governor of Punjab. He was re-elected in 1977 when Bhutto made him Pakistan's railway minister and PPP general secretary.

Following Bhutto's ouster in 1977 and the declaration of martial law, Hussein was thrown into jail. He remained in prison for three-and-a-half years without a trial. And was freed in 1980 upon the demands of the hijackers of the PIA airplane and exiled to Syria where he spent almost a year. Later, through the intercession of the United Nations High Commission on refugees, Hussein received political asylum in Sweden. He now carries a Swedish passport.

Hussein is quick-witted with a firebrand intensity. He speaks fluent English with a Karol Bagh drawl. Here are excerpts from an exclusive interview with INDIA TODAY:



Hussein: outspoken critic

"The hatred in the hearts of the people is tremendous and mounting. It will burst. We will challenge this authority and topple it."

Q. ***Do you think you will ever go back to Pakistan?***

A. I never wanted to leave. Even when I was released I gave them in writing that I did not want to leave my country. That I want to live and die there. I wanted a trial. We are the victims of brutes. I am now reorganising our party. I have travelled to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland and England. There are nearly 2 million Pakistanis abroad whose support must be mustered.

Q. ***What's been the response?***

A. Tremendous, wherever we go. I can say that inside and outside the country we have more than 80 per cent of the people of Pakistan. If elections are held, we will win a thumping majority as we did in 1970 and 1977.

Q. ***But how did you know of your strength within the country?***

A. We keep in touch indirectly. But everyone's scared of these brutes. Anybody can be taken along with the family and put behind bars and there's no accountability. Undercurrents going on. The hatred in the hearts of the people is tremend and mounting. It will burst. We will challenge this authority topple it.

Q. ***But Zia seems so secure and things look pretty stable.***

A. Then why does he not hold general elections? He is ru with the rod and he has gagged the people and the press. The a sea of hatred there. He's the most hated man in Pakistan.

Q. ***Well, there are many observers who believe that Bhut rule was far more repressive than Zia's and that Zia is n benevolent in comparison.***

A. How can anybody that? In Mr Bhutto's time th was the press, there was Pa ment. There were heated deb over Mr Bhutto's policies. A Bhutto processions were allow But who can demonstrate n Any person who even says "L live Mr Bhutto" is flogged pu cly. Even when Mr Bhutto prime minister a criminal c was lodged against him. think anybody can lodge a rep against this General?

Q. ***Why not?***

A. All the pillars of stre of state have been demolis There's no Parliament left parties, no trade unions or dent unions. A month ago wyers held a meeting ou Lahore to demand democ and they were publicly flog And Justice Safdar Shah, the preme Court judge who rule favour of Mr Bhutto during appeal—well a criminal case registered against Mr Shah that poor judge had to leave country by night and now ha taken political asylum in L don. So you can well imagin a Supreme Court judge is safe in a country, what to say of the common man?

Q. ***How are the military courts functioning?***

A. They have summary trials. Even lawyers can't ap before them. The majors who run these courts type the co first and start the trial later. They keep the orders inside the drawer and they stage the summary trial. And the verdict ca be challenged in the Supreme Court.

Q. ***Do you think this is the most tyrannical regime ever in Pakistan?***

A. Look for yourself. Even the mofussil government is run by the military. Every key post—district collectors, sup endents of police, heads of departments—is occupied by men. They serve not the Constitution but the army brutes the army people are amassing enormous wealth inside and o de the country.

Q. ***Ayub Khan was milder in comparison?***

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A. Ayub? Well, we don't praise dictators and Ayub was a tor. But Zia has broken all previous records. He has no scru- He's the biggest liar ever born. He lives on lies. He came to r and swore on the Koran he would hold elections in 90 Now he says he will not elections unless he gets ve results.

Q. What does that mean?

A. It means his stooges ld be elected. So he will r hold elections because scared that PPP will come power. This proves that scandal created against Mr tto's government that rig- brought Mr Bhutto to er was wrong. Time has ed it.

Q. How does PPP *man- to survive in Pakistan?*

A. Zia is trying to purge it. Thousands of workers belonging PIA were shunted out because they were suspected of being members. The same with steel mill workers, railways. Any- who is anti-Zia is labelled Al-Zulfikar, anti-country, or ter- st or criminal, although Zia is the biggest criminal. He's the rist, he has taken the nation hostage.

Q. But the Pakistani people are brave and proud. Why do they up with this?

A. I assure you the people are still fighting. About 20,000 tical workers are in jail, thousands have been flogged, and 11 e burned themselves alive for Mr Bhutto's cause. And Benazir ill in jail.

Q. But how do you know that all of them are political priso- s?

A. Well, if you ask Zia he will say they are criminals. At one e I was called a criminal. I was put behind bars as a murderer. the statements of the so-called witnesses were never given to or my lawyer.

Q. What did they actually charge you with doing?

A. The alleged incident took place in 1973 but the case was tered against me in 1979. They accused me of shooting in a lic meeting and killing people. I was a minister at that time. you think that a minister goes to a public meeting and kills ple? How foolish they are, how ridiculous!

Q. How is your family ng all this?

A. My family is still in abad. The Swedish Go- ment sent them tickets visas six months ago, but stan didn't allow them to . They are hostages.

Q. Don't you fear that speaking so freely will rdise your family's wel- e?

A. That's what Zia wants. wants to gag me because in the free world and ld not talk against martial law. But I am not representing my y of five children and my wife but 80 million people and if million people are freed then my family should be freed. I care whether they kill my family or kill me, but we are ng for the rights of the people of Pakistan.

Q. What do you feel about America's honeymoon with Zia?

A. I am sorry but this great nation, America, which professes such a great love of democracy at home is supporting dictatorship in Pakistan. When there is martial law in Poland, they are all flared up and concerned, but in Pakistan they support the brutes and usurpers.

"I am sorry but this great nation, America, which professes such a great love of democracy at home is supporting dictatorship in Pakistan. When there is martial law in Poland, they are all flared up and concerned, but in Pakistan they support the brutes and usurpers."

Q. But how do the people of Pakistan feel about this?

A. Let me put it this way. The enemy of the people of Pakistan is Zia, and Zia is America's friend, so what do you think the people of Pakistan will think? The Americans supported the Shah of Iran against the will of the Iranians. They are making another Shah out of Zia. The people of America should realise that their taxes are being spent on brutes.

Q. Yes, but Pakistan has a strategic position for America. And the view is that no matter who is in power he should be supported.

A. I agree with the importance of the geopolitical location of Pakistan. But the survival of Pakistan lies with democracy in Pakistan.

Q. What has one to do with the other?

A. The dictatorship has negated the Constitution. As you know, Pakistan is a federation and its binding force is the Constitution. If this cementing force goes, then there is likelihood that Pakistan will break further.

Q. Do you see any evidence of this?

A. Well, Zia has practically created Pakhtoonistan by accommodating three-and-a-half million refugees. Who knows out of them how many are commandos? And they are not going back. So Zia has practically made Pakhtoonistan which was no more than a stunt in the past. Now it is a reality. And the people behind Sindhu Desh and people like G.M. Syed, have not accepted Pakistan. There is resentment that Punjabi judges murdered Mr Bhutto. There is much hatred to be exploited.

Q. But isn't it to Pakistan's advantage to lean toward the US because of the Soviet menace in Afghanistan?

A. We want good relations with Russia, with China, with India, with Iran and Afghanistan. Under Mr Bhutto we got the Simla accords, we had good relations with Daoud in Kabul and with Russia. For the first time we even got a steel mill from the Russians. We cannot afford to be over friendly with one country at the cost of an noying another superpower.

Q. What about the Kashmir problem?

A. We do not believe in war. It cannot settle any problem. We want a peaceful settlement. We want to follow the Simla accords.

Q. Do you think secularism can work in Pakistan?

A. We are Muslim. We want to remain Muslim. We are against "Mullah-ism." "Mullah-ism" is not Islam but a disservice to Islam. They have confined Islam to rituals and have forgotten the spirit of Islam. They are fanatics and narrow-minded. Islam is to serve humanity. They are disserving humanity. They are helping the brutes and the dictators.

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WEST GERMANY

The Alien Problem

THE SCENE could have been straight out of A *Thousand and One Nights* but it is set in Kreuzberg in the heart of modern Berlin: veiled Muslim women hurriedly walking with children, shops filled with exotic merchandise and the piercing *Allah-o-Akbar* cry of the devout Muslim coming from a nearby mosque. The atmosphere of an oriental bazar provides a sharp contrast to the usual signs of the immaculate Teutonic life-style. But in Berlin as in most cities of West Germany—Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich and Cologne—though the original German character has been retained, signs of alien cultures taking root are abundant. And with this there is the inevitable increasing of hostility between Germans and foreigners.

West Germany today has an alien population of some 2 million mainly from Turkey, Spain, Greece, Portugal and Italy. The Indian community is about 22,000 strong. Together with their families, the number of foreigners is 4.7 million, including asylum seekers. And with 1.5 million people, the Turks form the majority.

According to reputed opinion researchers the mood in West Germany has changed radically in the past few years. Whereas in 1978 some 39 per cent of Germans wanted foreigners to be repatriated, in December 1981 the figure rose to 66 per cent. Every second German now says that even foreign children born here should be denied a permanent residence permit—compared with 7 per cent three years ago. These figures reflect irrational fears of diluting the national identity; but there is also concern over being displaced from jobs in a time of economic crisis.

Growing Antagonism: Sociologists fear that this antagonistic attitude towards foreigners is too ingrained and no amount of rationalisation can change it. And with the worsening economic situation it has become all too easy to blame foreigners. For instance, there are those who ask if, without foreigners, there would not be less crime, a less acute housing shortage and better employment opportunities. Sadly, this kind of talk evokes a frighteningly strong public response and now more than three-quarters of Germans believe that the foreigners are the root of many of West Germany's problems.

The *Auslaenderproblem*—the "alien problem"—has become the bugbear for every German politician. The Bundestag (Parliament) was recently the scene of heated exchanges between the Government and the Opposition over what is being increasingly referred to as a "guest workers' culture", the term "guest worker" being used, not without a touch of contempt, to refer to foreign workers.

The latest unemployment figure of 2 million has gone a long way in fuelling animosity against foreigners. To the average German the solution is simple—the 2 million figure could be wiped out if an equal number of alien workers were repatriated. The actual situation is, however, quite different. In any case, most of the "guest workers" are employed to perform menial duties which no German would want to do.

Irrational Fears: Animosity against Turks and other Third World nationals, has also brought old Nazis out of their political hibernation; irrational fears of the local population have been cleverly exploited by rightist groups like the *Buergerinitiative* für *Auslaenderstopp* (citizens' initiative for stopping foreigners). Another rightist group, the Kieler Liste für *Auslaenderbegrenzung* (Kiel List for limitation of foreigners) even mustered 6 per cent of the votes in Kiel during the last election in the northern state of Schleswig-Holstein.

Resentment against foreigners has been further provoked by the increasing number of asylum seekers who have been pouring in from many Third World countries and Poland. Refugees from Poland are tolerated because they belong to the "same cultural circle" and because "they cannot possibly be sent back to a totalitarian state". These explanations seek to justify the acceptance of a wave of white refugees from East European states while citizens of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are promptly refused recognition as refugees, no matter how valid their case may be.

Potential Threat: The prospect of large numbers of potential immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, coming in the guise of refugees, with the objective of reaping the harvest of social welfare benefits which the liberal German asylum law provides has alarmed the Germans considerably. The loopholes in the law are being closed and new checks are being introduced to deter potential refugees. Visa requirements have long been introduced for a number of these countries, including India. Work-permits will not be granted to refugees for the first two years of their stay and the long process of appeals against deportation of fake refugees will be shortened so that the refugee can be sent home as quickly as possible. Some 50 Indians, mainly from the villages of Punjab, were issued deportation orders recently.

The coming weeks and months are likely to witness sharp wrangling over the future of foreigners in West Germany. It will also demonstrate the extent to which German politicians and, above all, the German people are willing to absorb and integrate foreigners in their society. As for foreigners, they will have to make an all-out effort to conform with local customs and thus make their integration palatable to the Germans. A certain accommodation on both sides is sorely needed to preserve social harmony.

—MANIK MEHTA in Bonn

Der Spiegel's cover story on immigrants: increasing hostility

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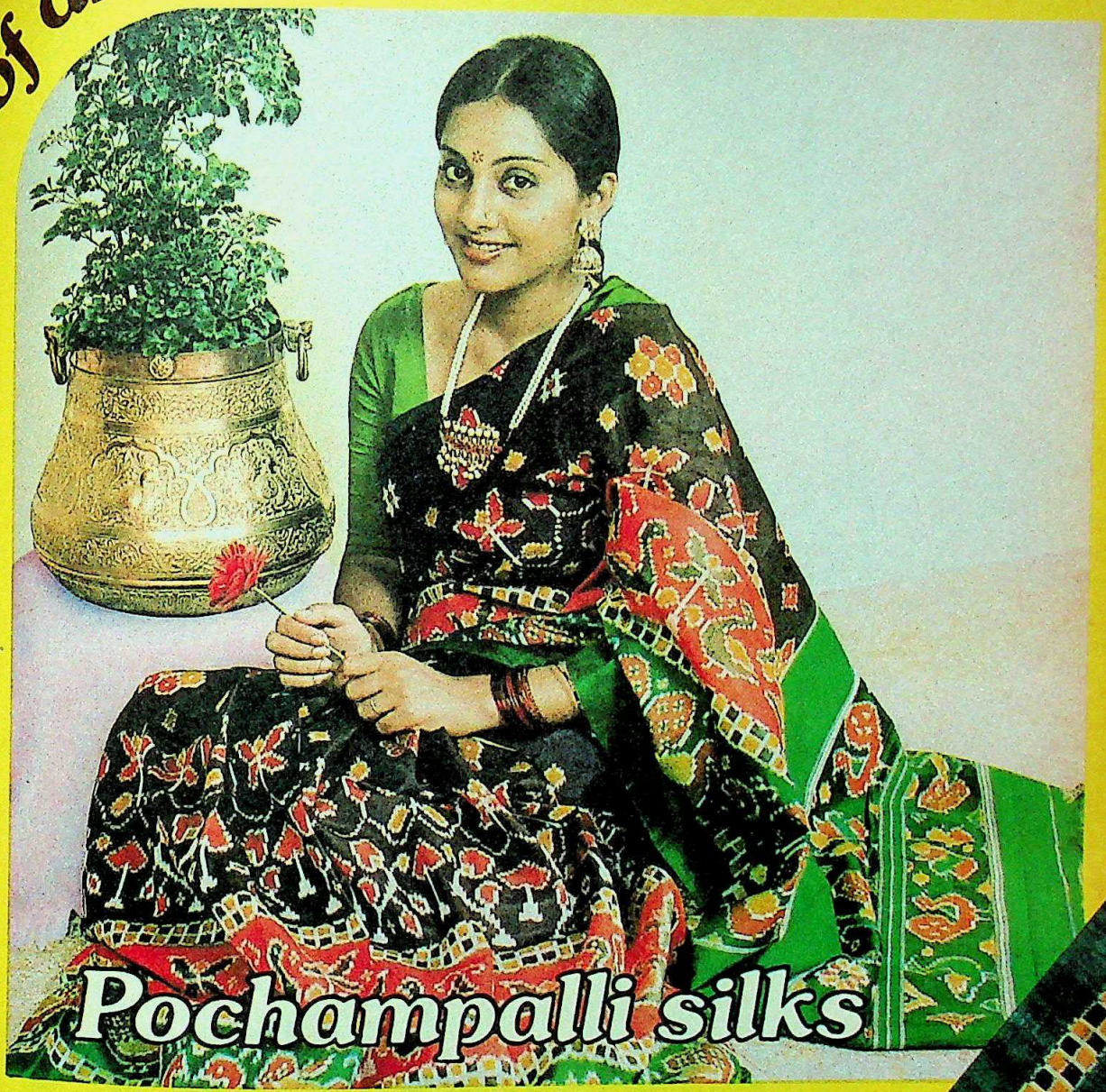
A remembrance of an exquisite tradition



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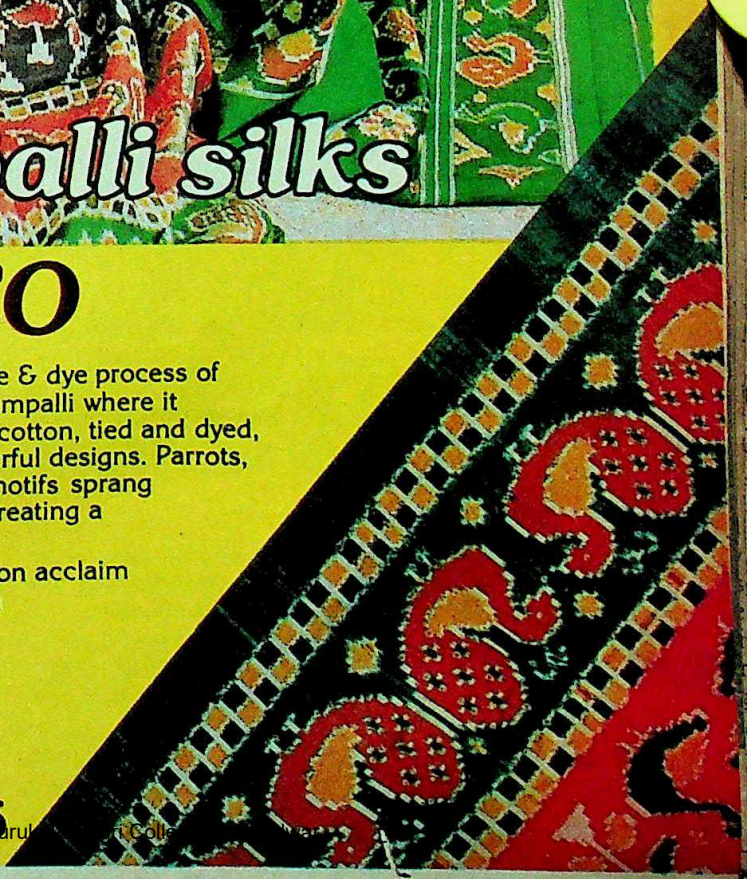

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Tyre that never tires

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CINEMA

The Genius Of Satyajit Ray

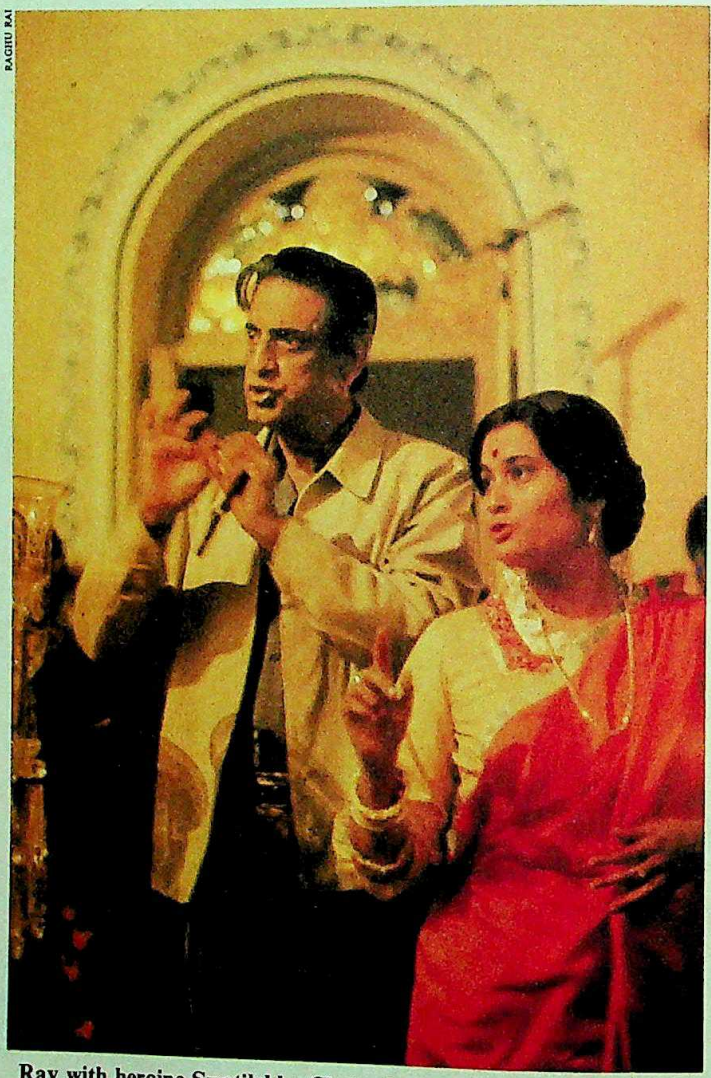
"NOW, SAY that line again without dropping your voice... like this. You see, that makes all the difference between theatre and the cinema. And you, Victor, walk up straight to your lady standing by the mirror in the next shot. Get the timing right, will you? Walking is walking, not sauntering. Well, will someone open that window please. We need a suggestion of the dark winter night outside... so cut that light there. Now, Victor, you must embrace her from behind and she then does a half- turn with her face. Quite coquettishly, if the point hasn't been taken already. And hum that line together. Nice voice you have, Victor, perfect tenor. Now, SILENCE. Camera... hang on, Victor, as you kiss her, you're free to choose which cheek. ACTION...."

—Satyajit Ray in conversation with his unit members on the sets of *Ghare Baire*.

AT CALCUTTA's Indrapuri studio, grimy and quite unexciting, a chance visitor misses a breath at the sight of a period bedroom. The bed itself is authentic to the last motif carved on its legs. At one corner of the set stands a German sewing machine of the pre-Singer vintage. The packet of cigarettes lying on the shiny marble-top table carries a label which is rakishly Edwardian. The matchbox is decades behind the familiar 'Aces' or 'Horse'; it is made in Sweden, and called 'Seidensticker'. The candles flicker on curlicue stands, and the scattered 500-watt studio lights capture on the walls the soft, dappled texture of a pre-electricity rich-man's home in Bengal. It is *circa* 1907.

Despite the presence of knots of crewmembers in the non-shooting zones, the glare of set-lights hung atop ceilingless walls, the serpentine cables spread on the floor, and the confusion that punctuates the shooting of a film, the set simply makes a visitor rub his eyes in disbelief for its power of evocation of a milieu, its fidelity to details, its range and precision.

Then, in the penumbra of the lit-up area, looms the man, hunched behind the Arriflex camera, one eye glued to the 'finder', the Dunhill pipe hanging contemplatively from his fingers, the faded grey jacket looking dusty in the semi-darkness.



RAGHU RAI

Ray with heroine Swatilekha Chatterjee on the sets of *Ghare Baire*

Not a muscle twitches on his face when he gazes on, nor a leg moves. He turns into what seems like a sculpture, as though Rodin's *Thinker* had changed his stance. And then the word 'Action' rends the stillness of the pre-shooting moments, like an army command.

Cultural Ambassador: Satyajit Ray, gently greying at 62, with 24 feature films and six shorts in the cans, has almost imperceptibly come up in the 28 years since the release of his first film, *Pather Panchali*, as India's leading cultural ambassador to the rest of the world. His medium is the cinema, the youngest of the 7 Muses, his language is one of lights, lens and the rhythm of acting and cutting; his audience, though never as large as that of the makers of commercial films, is still large—at least much larger than the connoisseurs of good poetry, good painting, good novels or good classical music.

For thousands of foreigners, the image of India comes off not through the efforts of the foreign office bureaucracy, nor so much through the assorted literature on the country, but from the films of Ray. And, unlike the success of the modern 'curry westerns', Ray has a market abroad which is predominantly non-ethnic. On its first release abroad in 1958, *Pather Panchali* ran in New York's Fifth Avenue Playhouse for eight months. *Jalsaghar* ran in Paris only recently for nine months. And the steady growth of his foreign audience has marked the successful propagation of a view of India which is far removed from the calendar-cover image of the country.

In fact it is one of the inscrutable quirks of fate that India, with a tradition of epic poetry, dance, sculpture and architecture that dates back three millenia, is now best presented by an artist working in a medium no more than 75 years old. No creator of the arts in India, living or dead, has ever attained the shadowy pinnacle of fame as Ray has. And he has accomplished it in a sphere as fiercely competitive as the cinema, where works are pitted against each other every year at international festivals; fads and fashions change like patterns in a kaleidoscope; and only very few qualify to be treasured by posterity.

International Acclaim: Ray's niche

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Ray's niche

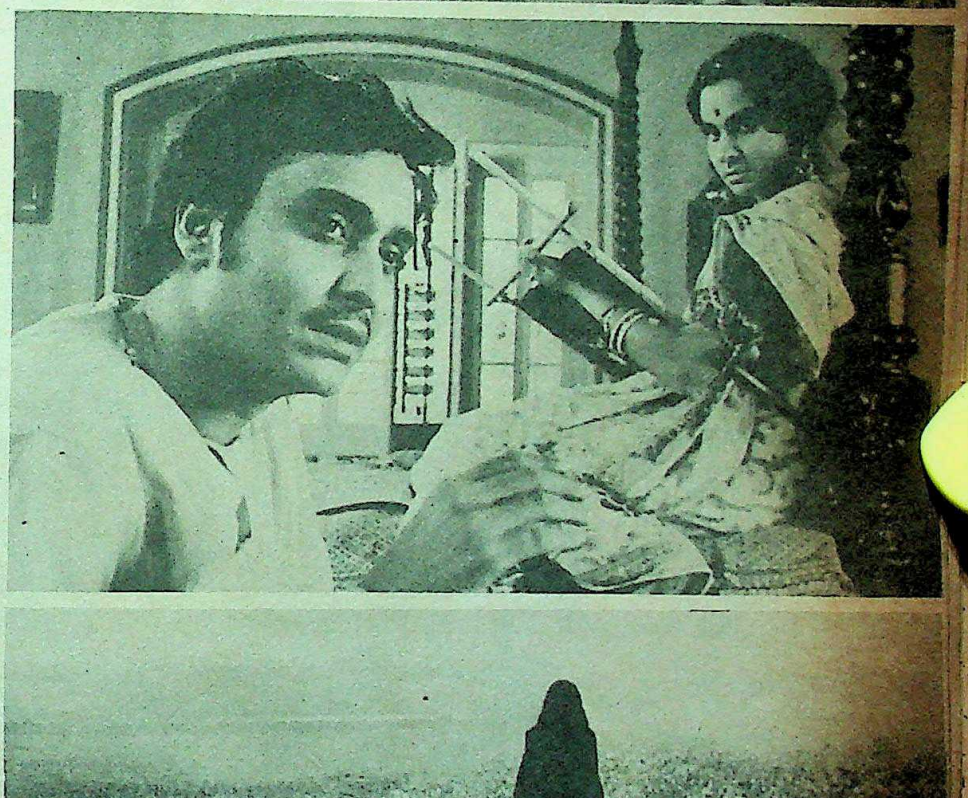
all of fame of international cinema is
y secure. The arithmetic of awards
Ray now shares that dizzy perch
e only a handful of film makers sit.
Lindsay Anderson, the British film ma-
and critic, recently said: "I'd compare
jit Ray to Eisenstein, Chaplin, Kuro-
, Bergman and Antonioni. He is
g the greatest in world cinema."

At no stage in his long career has his
ivity flagged, or the edge of inventive-
blunted. His filmography is marked
unquestioned classics, such as *Pather*
hali, *Aparajito*, *Devi*, *Jalsaghar*, *Charu-*
and *Jana Aranya*, and now, as many
the Bengal film industry prophesy,
Baire too is heading for its share of
rtality. But even his minor works
e that inner glow of class which sets
apart from the breed of films that
nly competent. Said M.S. Sathyu, the
r of *Garm Hawa*: "Show me a 10-
nd shot from a Ray film, and I can
you it's his." "But how?" "By its
"

His success is not to be measured at
cash register, because he has never
been a part of the commercial film
stry which has thrived by profitably
taining the teeming millions, mainly
roviding three-hour escapes from rea-
But, within the confines of serious ci-
, no other film maker in India has
able to gather around himself a
y loyal audience. The fact that each
film so far has paid for itself knocks
bottom out of the conventional argu-
that the 'art film', *per se*, always
s to be subsidised. Since *Pather Pan-*
he never had to search for finan-
the financiers sought him. And he
e his art so eminently viable without
ing its richness or making any con-
n to popular tastes.

Rare Honours: Very few film makers
e world (and none in India) have mat-
Ray's flair for bagging international
s with the regularity of a metrono-
Altogether 35 international honours
come to him in 28 years, including
rizes at the three big-league festivals
lin, Cannes and Venice. In 1978, the
Film Festival committee adjudged
one of the three all-time masters of
nema, a rare honour which he shared
Chaplin and Bergman. The same year
d University conferred on him doc-
e *honoris causa*, a respect which the
-year-old institution had shown to only
ther film personality, Chaplin.

Last autumn, Ray was specially ho-
d by both the Cannes and Venice
al committees for his total contribu-
o cinema. He travelled to Cannes for
first time in many years. At Hotel



Scenes from *Pather Panchali* (top); *Charulata* (centre); and *Devi*: a master's evolution

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Martinez, where he put up during his stay at the beautiful town in the French Riviera, an entire new generation of young film makers feted him for his work. Said Costa-Gavras, the Greece-born maker of films like Z and *Missing* and a director of the prestigious Cinematheque Francaise: "Ray's films have an inner strength. They have got a classic quality. I think a revaluation of his films has begun in France right now."

Earlier, wrote critic Alan Brien of *The Sunday Times*: "...let there be no doubt, Satyajit Ray is one of the master directors of today, not just in some regional ghetto class, but measured against world competition." Opined prominent film historian Penelope Houston in her *The Contemporary Cinema*: "Until somebody else comes along to change it, Satyajit Ray's Bengal will remain the cinema's India." Picking up Ray as the only Indian film personality worth a mention, summed up *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the august tome of knowledge: "Of all the film directors of India ...the most famous is the Bengali Satyajit Ray."

Regional Idiom: Except *Sadgati*, his 1982 six-reeler based on a Munshi Premchand story and *Shatranj Ke Khilari* also a Premchand story, all his films are in Bengali—not only in the language the characters speak but also in its idioms and nuances. Yet he has communicated with perfect ease to an audience outside his native milieu. In fact the Ray *aficionado* has no linguistic identity or nationality; his only generic trait is a certain degree of enlightened receptiveness. Once cued in, the sounds and images transcend all geographic frontiers.

Journeying through Ray-land is like riding on a Wellsian time shuttle. It is a voyage through dark tunnels and sunwashed fields of human emotion, done at a speed at which centuries and attitudes blend and blur. Back in a gloomy, rain-soaked Bengal Village, the "Song of the Little Road" (English title for *Pather Panchali*) echoes to the rhythm of birth, death and nature. In *Jalsaghar*, tearing its way through surrealist marsh and fog, the feudal nobility rides to its grand death. In *Charulata*, amid brocaded walls, ornate

INTERVIEW

"I Don't Live In An Ivory Tower"

WHILE shooting, Satyajit Ray is constantly on the move, checking out lenses, testing the dolly, measuring light, giving final instruction to his actors and actresses. But, before every shot, there is a moment of contemplation, when he gazes on from behind the camera, his chin resting meditatively on his finger, his massive six feet, four-and-a-half inches frame assuming a slight Rodinesque droop. When he calls out "action", rending the stillness of a few moments, it has the ring of an army command.

The part of Calcutta where he lives forms the old European quarter of the city where the grand colonial mansions are slowly giving way to modern box-type buildings. He stays in a rented house, one of the surviving old and spacious kind, with a majestic wooden stairway and beautiful sunwashed balconies fitted out with wrought iron railings.

When he is not out on locations or in the studios, he is usually at home—no parties, no late nights, no skylarking. The room where he works is big, shadowy and unexpectedly gloomy. The gothic feel of the room is heightened by the old teak furniture, and the book shelves whose tops almost touch the high ceiling. On the racks, opposites like Egyptian art and Chinese pottery, German music and Tagore's poetry, stay in harmonious coexistence.

When at work, his basic tools are a portable typewriter which he uses with professional ease, an easel which is always kept handy, and a piano standing at a corner. After dinner, when the streets go absolutely quiet, strains of a Bach fugue or a Mozart solo pour out of the room; his neighbours instantly realise that the 'tall man' is at the piano.

Recently, between drafting a lecture, correcting the proofs of his children's novels for the various puja *annuals, and brushing up the script of* Ghare Baire, *he spoke to* INDIA TODAY *Correspondent* SUMIT MITRA. *Excerpts:*

Q. Ghare Baire *is both a love story and a political novel. How are you treating it?*

A. As a love story. Isn't it a love story first? I mean the political allusions and the interpretation of terrorism are all there, but what is more important to the script is the triangle between the characters, and the eventual resolution of the triangle.

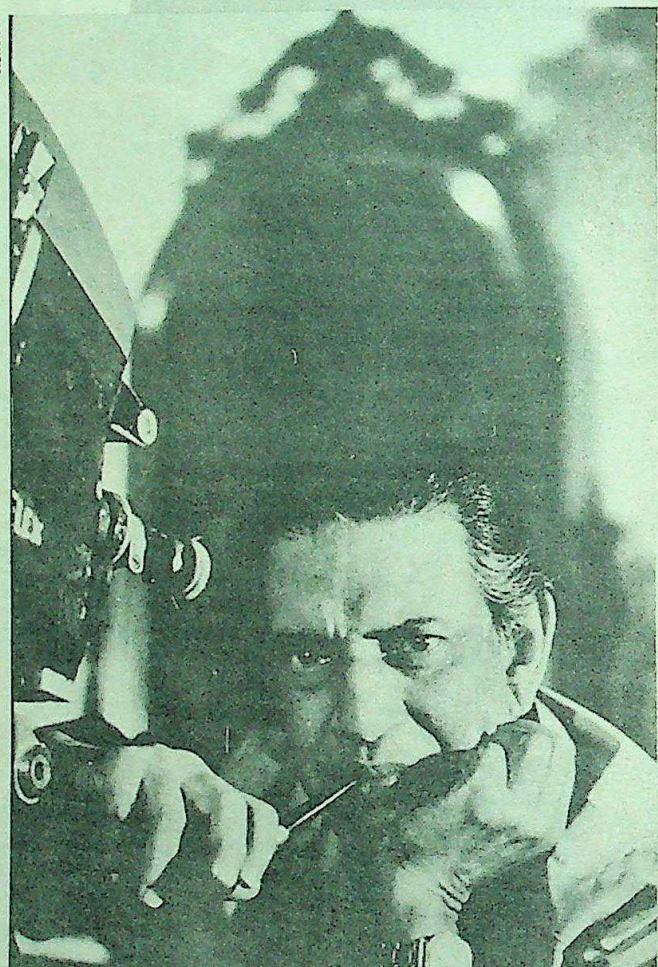
Q. *A lot of people expect you to handle a political theme.*

A. Where is the story?

Q. *Aren't stories strewn all around...in the decay of the political system...disintegration of parties...rise of the personality cult?*

A. You can't possibly make films that identify political parties and individuals. The censorship laws do not permit that. In India it is not possible to make a Costa-Gavras type of film.

Q. *You're such a busy man. How do you find time to observe the social types? Isn't it this observation that makes your*



RAGHU RAI

A pensive Ray the best yet to come

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films so compelling?

A. I don't live in an ivory tower. Still, a lot of it comes from imagination. Then of course there are the magazines, the newspapers, friends, relatives, acquaintances... I mean all secondary sources. They keep me informed about the social nuances. Take the Congress MLA in *Jana Aranya* for instance; I had actually heard a politician talk like that. I am not cut off from life the way you imagine. I too have to go to the Writers' Building (the West Bengal Secretariat) from time to time.

Q. *Do you take a morning walk?*

A. Not quite. The pavements have all disappeared from Calcutta and I'm sick of being stopped by total strangers who ask: "What's your next film, Mr Ray?"

Q. *Are you disgusted with Calcutta?*

A. Not at all. I can't think of living anywhere else.

Q. *Why?*

A. It's intangible. Maybe past associations, childhood memories. But the area where I live has no childhood ties with me. I grew up in north Calcutta and Bhawanipur. Yet, I can feel my roots here.

Q. *But you've shifted your entire sound processing system to Bombay.*

A. The simple reason is that there are better sound mixing facilities in Bombay than anywhere else. It is a treat to work with a re-recordist like Mangesh Desai ...so sensitive, so technically aware.

Q. *You're also working more and more with Bombay actors.*

A. They're superb. And it's true that there is a dearth of acting talent in Bengal, one reason why I want to make more films in Hindi. Sanjeev Kumar, Om Puri, Amjad Khan, Smita Patil, Mohan Agashe—all exceptionally talented people.

Q. *Amitabh Bachchan?*

A. He is also good. Very muscular. I like the brashness and lack of inhibition of the Bombay actors.

Q. *Have you seen* Sholay?

A. Oh yes. I saw it in Bombay, in the first week of its release. Very able, very competent film—though pretty low on artistic content. In fact I took Amjad for Shatranj on the strength of his performance in *Sholay*. I hope you know that the characterisation of Gabbar Singh did not go down well with the public for the first few weeks. It caught on later. But I thought if an actor could be so good and so rangy why not cast him against the grains and see how it works.

Q. *Doesn't the unreality of Bombay films repel you?*

A. No, no. All those songs and the changes of costume during a dance are—I think—unique distancing devices.

Q. *You spend a lot of time spinning fantasies yourself—in your children's literature and the fantasy films. How about a sci-fi film from you?*

A. I must say it's quite impossible to make a science fantasy in this country with the kind of resources that we have here. Science fantasy is one area where Hollywood has made rapid strides. The other day I saw a film called *Blade Runner* which is a futuristic version of Los Angeles in the year 2001. Fantastic. Quite unbelievable in technical terms.

Q. *You were all set to film* The Alien?

A. That's another story. You know at least two of the Spielberg-Lucas films, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *ET*, would not have been possible without my script of *The Alien* being available throughout America in mimeographed copies. Some days back Arthur Clark telephoned me from London, saying that I should file a copyright case and should not take it lying down. Other than this personal complaint, I have no quarrel with the makers of science and space fantasies. I think it's a genre full of possibilities, though I also have a feeling that Spielberg and Lucas are unnecessarily complicating the stories. The story should be simple, clear, without frills.

Q. *Your critics say that your films have become too abstract, perhaps too remote. Are you aware of this criticism?*

A. Of course I am. But won't it be rather odd if I made U-turns at this stage and tried to be what I was not. Yes, I am a believer in logic and symmetry. I also think that in a film you cannot foist a form which is incongruous with the story. But I don't think my films are remote. At any rate, remote from what? From life? Is *Sadgati* remote from life?

Q. *What according to you is the most important Indian reality?*

A. To me, the most important reality of post-Independence India is disparity. Disparity of income, disparity of opportunities, disparity of wealth. All other problems are secondary to it.

Q. *How do you get on with Mrs Indira Gandhi?*

A. I know her well. But not to the extent of calling her "Indu" or "Indira". I detest being very close to politicians. But I've often written to her and she has promptly written back. Except once...

Q. *How do you assess her as a leader?*

A. I think she has piled mistake upon mistake, the Emergency being the most glaring of them. All I could do was to keep away from it all. Like many others I too was invited to make a film on the Emergency. I refused the offer and reminded them that I was indeed a very bad propagandist.

Q. *Do you believe in God?*

A. No. I don't believe in religion either. At least not in organised religion. Nor have I felt the necessity for any personal religion.

Q. *What is your philosophy?*

A. I haven't really thought about labels. But I've a feeling that this universe, and its incessant music, may not be entirely accidental. Maybe there is a cosmic design somewhere which we don't know. Take for instance the apparent sizes of the moon and the sun. They're exactly the same. At the time of total eclipse, the moon covers the sun edge to edge. Is that a coincidence? Take another example. The whole business of propagation of species—of sexual intercourse—has been possible because of the delight that goes with it. Who made coitus so intensely pleasurable? Is that a coincidence too? Watch the protective colourations of birds and insects. The grasshopper acquires the exact shade of green that helps it merge in its surroundings. The marine life and the shore birds put on the exact comouflage. Could it all be a coincidence? I wonder. I don't mystify it either. I think some day the human mind will explore all the mysteries of life and creation the way the mysteries of the atom have been explored.

Q. *Do you think of death?*

A. Not yet. The thought comes to a man only in a flash. Six years before his death, it came to my father, Sukumar Ray. He was addressing a Brahmo Samaj meeting. Suddenly he turned pale, and could not speak any longer. He was gripped by a feeling that perhaps every word that he was uttering was untrue, and perhaps death was lurking near. He wrote about this experience in a letter, and underlined the word death. I have no death-wish. I never felt any, not even in my darkest moments. Till 50 or 60, you don't think about death. It strikes a personal chord much later.

Q. *Does it strike a personal chord with you?*

A. You know last year I was in hospital for a few days. It was a minor illness, which left no mark on my body. But... did I come back the same man? I think there are moments—caused by illness or even by a sudden crisis of belief—which serve as a grim reminder of the fact that one is aging, that the body may not be able to carry out any longer what the spirit dictates.

Q. *Have you made your best film?*

A. (laughs) Frankly, no.

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banisters, and incessant talk of Bentham and Mill, a young and lonely nineteenth century housewife gives her heart away. In *Shatranj*, two men squabble over trivia and keep on shuffling their chess pieces as empires change hands.

The journey continues. With *Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen* it veers into the land of fantasia where a village yokel with musical pretensions, and his companion, a percussionist of identical calibre, are suddenly blessed by a gaggle of ghosts. They don't have to look back after that. Then the world changes; with *Pratidwandi* (The Adversary) in 1970, it becomes harsher, gloomier and taut. At its end, an uncommitted youth finally comes to terms with reality at a whistle-stop town where he listens to a strange bird call that takes him back to his childhood.

Varied Scenarios: The journey loops round the world of showbiz—its glamour and its pain—in *Nayak*. It returns to the brutality of city life, its cut-throat competition and the gambles that are played on perpetually high stakes, as in *Jana Aranya*. It immediately hits a bright spot, guiding viewers along the maze of Varanasi streets with a witty and plucky private eye to keep company, in the delightful whodunit, *Jai Baba Felunath*.

The voyage enters its bumpiest trail in its more recent phase. Off go the soft soil and the banana groves of Bengal, together with the delicate crises and their subtle resolution. The landscape of *Sadgati* is harsh and bereft of all emotion. As Mohan Agashe, who plays the village priest, tugs away the body of Dukhi Chamar (played by Om Puri), the bonded Harijan labourer who died working for him, benedictions from the Gita come out of his mouth with a scalding irony.

With *Piku*, his 1982 two-reel film made for the French television, the world turns only a shade grimmer, and the liberal humanism of his earlier films seems like a thing from the past. Piku is a six-year-old in a bourgeois home where the father is cynically aloof, the mother is exhausted and self-pitying even in her adultery, and the grandfather, who loves him, has a fatal stroke. These dead-end relationships are seen through the eyes of the boy, who goes on drawing flowers in his sketch-book almost as a gesture of protest.

Abiding Affinity: And now, with *Ghare Baire* (The Home and the World), Ray's art turns a full circle, veering back to the milieu with which he has an abiding emotional link—Bengal at the turn of the century. His most perfect film so far, *Charulata*, based on a Tagore story, explored the place of a woman in a changing society. *Ghare Baire*, also from a Tagore novel, picks up the thread of his essay on womanhood. Here, Bimala, the housewife (played by newcomer Swatilekha Chatterjee), is torn between her cool, rational and politically moderate husband, Nikhilesh (Victor Bannerjee) and her lover Sandip (Soumitra Chatterjee), a fire-eating revolutionary whose irresponsible terroristic acts lead to communal conflagration in a peaceful village. Nikhilesh dies in the arson, but after realising that his wife has seen through the sham. It is Tagore's consummate (and unpopular) interpretation of terrorism. Surprisingly, Ray has accepted the interpretation lock, stock and barrel.

If *Charulata* was an indictment of the excesses of liberalism, Ghare Baire is surely turning out to be an equally bitter rejection of the cult of violence, terrorism and the closed society. And both, the political theses are encased two almost musically-structured love st ries. Says Chatterjee, whose assignment *Ghare Baire* is his 11th in a Ray film "Both the indictments are true, and er nently applicable to the Bengal socie Tagore was against excess of any kin And so is Ray. Both are classicists in th sense."

Ray shines in Bengali society as piece of oddity, standing, at 6 feet 4½ ches, at least eight inches taller than t average Indian. His friend David McCu chion once commented: "Satyajit is a like Alexander the Great to look at." H English diction and accents are somethi that one would associate with the Brit aristocracy between the wars. His schola hip, though staggering in its range, be no trace of pomposity. His personal i —the fact that he is a rigid teetotaler a that he does not accept a rupee in bl money over his normal fees that ran from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.5 lakh per f —only sets him apart in the profession.

Versatile Talent: What makes Ray a person so compelling? Ask an admir and odds are that he will point at his m ti-facetedness. Ray is quite a few 'be rolled into one: the country's best f maker; the best book designer in Beng the best selling author of fiction in Ben li; the best-known illustrator and gra artist; and, as Adi Gazdar, the Calc pianist, said: "Ray is one of the connoisseurs of Western classical musi the country."

Ray had established himself as a g phic artist and designer long before film career began. In fact the idea of ming *Pather Panchali* came to him w

OPINION

Bombay's View

Manmohan Desai: "Ray is indeed a great artist. Personally, I don't care much for modern art which, I think, is a con. They are all delirious outpourings of sick minds which nobody understands. But Satyajit Ray is the only modern artist whom I understand."

Thus spake Manmohan Desai, the maker of *Naseeb*, *Desh Premee*, and nine other 'super-duper' successes in a row. Desai spoke on: "The way Ray handles his actors is unbelievable. I'll never forget the acting of Madhabi Mukherjee in *Charulata*. I always regard Ray as the first man to bring realism to Indian cinema. First, and last.

"But realism is Ray's strength as well as his undoing. His films don't click here because he shows realism, whereas the masses crave melodrama and excitement. If only Ray had struck an optimistic note here and there, he could have won a large audience."

Can Ray ever make a blockbuster? Desai says: "Of course he can. What makes a blockbuster? The basic components are simple: fights and dances. And what is a fight but sound and editing? What is a dance but costumes, music, camera work and editing? Ray is a master editor. He is a master of sound, camera and music. He can combine all these elements and give us blockbusters in the true sense. That is, if only he wants to make it.

"One thing more. I strongly feel that he must use brighter shots, maybe with more lights. His films look positively gloomy. They should look cheerful. Many theatre-owners in this country don't even change their arcs in time. As a result, after three days, the evening shots tend to look like night shots, and night shots become too dark to look like anything. Why don't the Ray films brighten up a bit, with a little more ray?"

Manoj Kumar: The maker of *Kranti* and several other hot-sellers, Manoj Kumar meets visitors in a 40' x 40' hall littered with uncouth cupids. "Remember Ray's *Pratidwandi*," Kumar asks, with one of his eyes closed ruminatively, "the hero

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rating the novel's abridged edition. In early '50s, his free-lance work for the Press spawned a new range of con- and designs.

Despite his busy film schedules, Ray still time to practise calligraphy and as a illustrates his children's books. A few ago he designed a new type-face, the Roman, which is a subtle variation on Roman family of types. The type-face is a ral extension of his skill as a designer, and has entered the printer's al.

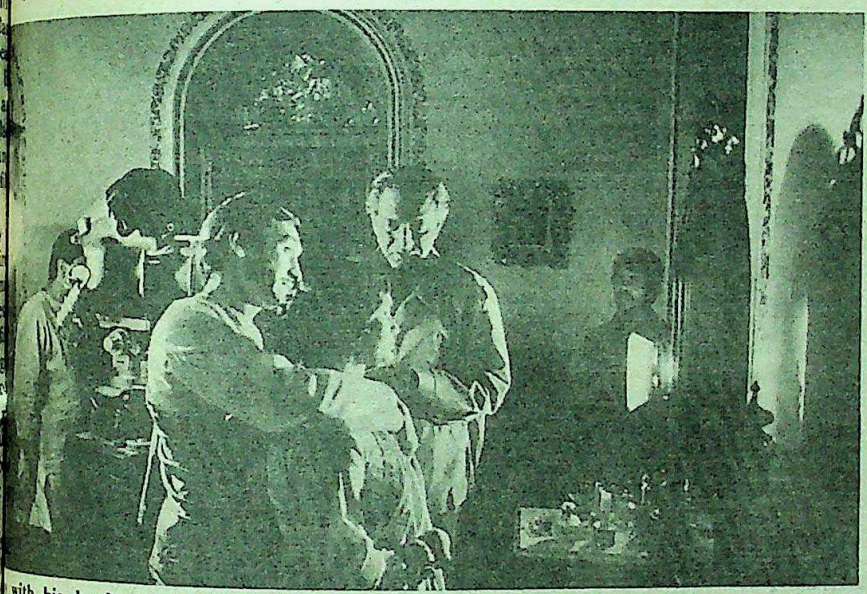
Ray's moorings in design and gra- arts are absolutely professional. For years before the release of *Pather chali*, he had been slogging away at the department of D.J. Keymer, a British advertising agency and the forerunner of today's Clarion Advertising Service. Between drawing up "campaigns for tea and biscuits", and designing book covers for Signet Press, his two passions were films and music. Music came in earlier.

Musical Predilection: It began in early childhood at the family choir where sombre Brahmo hymns were sung (*see box*). Said he, while lecturing in Calcutta last autumn: "I had grown up in an atmosphere of Bengali songs... a Vedic hymn like *Sangachhadhwam*, or the song by Rabindranath with a rather similar tune, *Anandalokay Mangalalokay*, or the stately chorus, *Padoprantey rakho shebokey*." But his dramatic predilections soon led him on to the symphonic music of the West. He goes on in the lecture: "As a small boy I had read about Beethoven in the *Book of Knowledge* ...now I was listening enraptured to his sonatas and symphonies. At the age when Bengali youth almost inevitably writes poetry, I was listening to European classical music."

Ray's gentle hubris is limited to underlining his difference from the surrounding culture, because he sincerely believes that his conscious Westernism has brought him rich dividends. "I am shaped in equal measure by the East and the West," he told INDIA TODAY. His apprenticeship in Western classical music began in boyhood, with horn gramophones, borrowed discs and a battered harmonium. The piano, which he plays today with professional ease, came in much later. At age 13, Ray and his school friend, Anil Gupta, now a retired Martin and Burn executive, began hunting for bargains in the music shops of Calcutta.

Gupta recalls that the earliest exciting discovery of the twosome was the first movement of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. Soon an avalanche of purchases followed, all resulting from skipped lunches and saved pocket money. Gupta introduced Ray to Beethoven's biography by Schindler and Donald Tovey's *Essays on Rhythm*. "Soon after," muses Gupta, "we stumbled on Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nacht Musik*. Manik (Ray's pet name) lost his sleep that night." Gupta, himself a Mozart scholar, put his finger on the similarity. He said: "Nobody can improve one note of Mozart. His music is beautiful, logical, symmetrical and inevitable—like Manik's films at their best."

Renaissance Ethos: Music taught Ray movement; the systematic training in art sharpened his eye for the expressive moment and the telling gesture; he inherited from his older genertion and the Brahmo cultural



with his lead couple, Bannerjee (left) and Chatterjee (right) on the sets of *Ghare Baire*: sensitive direction

faces an interview board where mem- bers want him to say that man's land- ing on the moon is the most important event of the decade, but the candidate says it is the war in Vietnam which is more important." Happy to clinch the point, adds Kumar, "that really sums up Ray. He is always against the tide, against what the masses desire. I hate to admit it, but I feel that Manikda is a splendid failure."

Kumar feels that Ray "gets a bit boring at times". He cites the opening sequence of *Charulata*, where "the bo- redom of Charulata infects the audi- ence". Sure he has a prescription up his sleeves. "If I were Ray", says he, "and had to establish Charulata's boredom, I'd without hesitation have put in a song there." What type of a song? "A folk maybe." But isn't a folk-song quite unexpected, if not shocking, in an aristocratic nineteenth century home? "Well, I'd then have brought in a neighbour singing some folksy tunes as the late S.D. Burman used to compose."

Ramesh Sippy: Regarded as the "intellect" of commercial cinema, Sippy made *Sholay* when he was just 29. He is 37 now, and capable of talking dispassionately about "our kind of cinema" as well as "Ray's kind", though he believes that "the twain can never meet".

Dressed in an all-white suit, and sitting at the Film Centre Studios at Tardeo, Sippy said: "Ray never aimed at a large audience; so there is no point in trying to lecture him into doing it.

"I always regard him as the first modernizer of the Indian cinema and its first artist. The level to which he goes in probing his characters is beyond the reach of an ordinary viewer." Sippy adds: "It is quite absurd to say that Ray projects poverty. *Charulata* is not a film about poverty, nor is *Shatranj*. It is only *Pather Panchali* that has poor people in it, but then it is not really a film about poverty. I think Ray appeals to you when you look at his films as a student of the cinema. The swing sequence in *Charulata* comes to my mind again and again for its lyricism and finesse.

"But Ray will never be able to make a film for the masses. His attitude to cinema is different. In our country nobody, not even Ray, has tried to bridge the gulf between art and entertainment."

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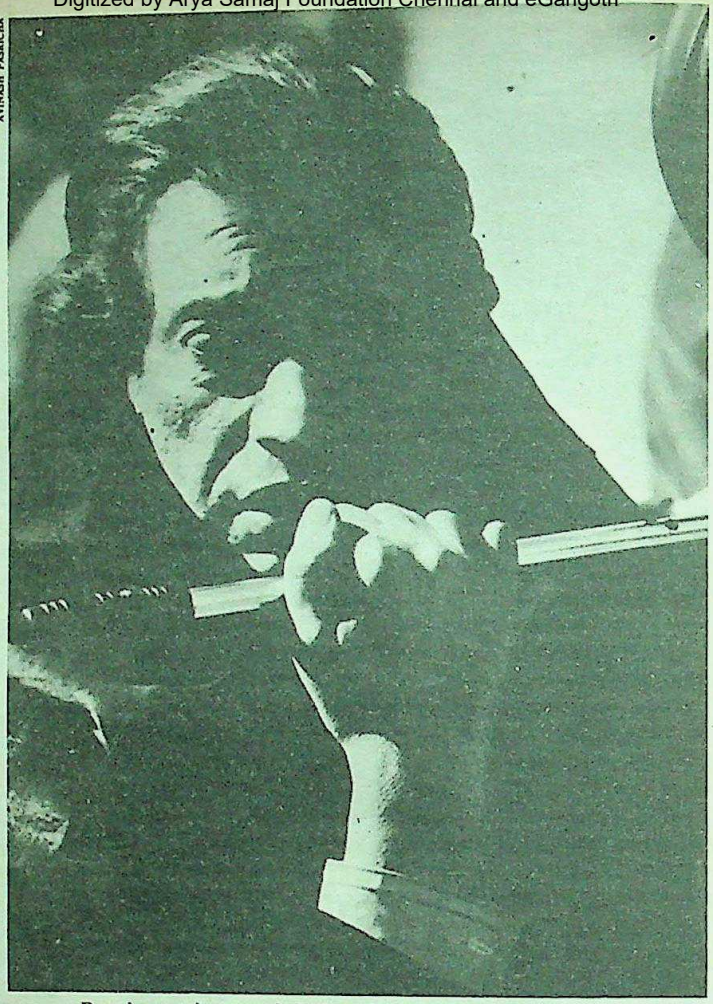
ambience a relentlessly enuiring mind; and his strong physical structure, made him an indefatigable creative machine. Says Shyam Benegal the younger film maker who recently completed a long documentary on Ray: "To me, Satyajit Ray is the last mantle-bearer of the Bengal Renaissance and the first example of a true modernist."

However, there is not an iota of the Renaissance-like "fine excess" in Ray's veins. He is a voracious reader, but is never desultory in his reading habits. When he takes a crash course in Egyptian art, it is implied that he will follow it up through most of the available texts, capping it all with a few pages of succinct summary punched out neatly on his trusty old portable Olivetti, which he can use blindfolded. When he reads up popular science, he makes it a point to refer to the textbooks, "so that I don't get carried away by popular phrases". After listening to piece of new music, he reaches for the notation book to write down the score.

It is this orderliness of mind which enabled him to emerge as one of the best writers of children's literature in India.



AVINASH PASRICHA

Ray in pensive mood during shooting: the magic touch

His 22 titles, mostly literatu for adolescents, are char toppers in Bengal selling o one lakh copies every year. Sa Arup Sarkar, whose Anand Publishers has thrived on Ray books: "You can safely pri 20,000 copies of any book Ray, which is about the mo that can be said about any Be gali author." In his fictio extra-terrestrials fly missions the earth (*see interview*); Felu a courageous private eye, so ves riddles that could have ven the fabled occupant of house on Baker Street so goose pimples; and Profes Shonku, the omnipresent sci tist, whips out his laser g navigates around black holes space and confronts some of mysteries of creation. His chil ren's fiction is Carl Sagan a Conan Doyle welded togeth

Profound Imprint: In Be gal, the admiration for R borders on worship. S Shakti Chattopadhyay, bo mian author, widely ackno edged to be the best living p in Bengal: "To live in the sa age as Satyajit Ray's, to w and even to forget one's s are, to me, a great fortune some day someone lowered time capsule, Bengal's cultu history in the past quar

A Family Affair

THE RAYS of Bengal have a stature in the state's cultural history which film historian Penelope Houston once compared to the Huxleys in England. Ray's grandfather, Upendrakishore, became Brahmo, pioneered half-tone printing methods, and began children's literature in Bengal single-handed.

Upendrakishore was a friend of the poet Tagore and a man of many talents. He became Calcutta's outstanding printer and worked out machines to his own design, including a screen-adjusting machine, a sixty-degree screen and a diaphragm system. His press, U. Ray and Sons, was rolling out his children's books with sophisticated illustrations, all done by him, as early as the turn of the century.

His son, Sukumar Ray, composed some outstanding nonsense rhymes that are now regarded as classics in Bengali. Fifty years later, his son, Satyajit, translated one of them as follows:

In the land of Bombaria
The customs are peculiar.
The king for instance, advocates
Gilded frames for chocolates.
The queen, who seldom goes to bed,
Straps a pillow round her head.
The courtiers—or so I'm told—
Turn cartwheels when they have a cold...

Sukumar, also a fine illustrator and talented painter, died at age 34 when Satyajit was only two-and-a-half. Till then the family was well-off. Wrote Sukhalata, Sukumar's elder sister and a versifier in English:

Ours was the only house
In the street at the time,
To own a telephone line.
People talked from floor to floor.

Compromises: After Sukumar's death in 1923, Suprabha, the young widow, shifted to her brother's house in South Calcutta, holding little Satyajit in her arms. They lived in comfort, though they certainly felt humiliated to stay as poor relations. Suprabha taught needlework and earned a few rupees on the side by making and selling exquisite terracotta pieces.

Satyajit, nicknamed Manik, began growing in height when he was 12; since then, like Topsy, he "jus' growed". He went to Ballygunj High School and later on to Presidency College where he read economics. He was never an outstanding student: he made his mark in college as an outstanding caricaturist.

The pursuit of music began when he was 13: his idols were Mozart, Beethoven and Bach. He had reservations about Indian music because it was "not dramatic". At 18 he fell in love with Bijoya, his first cousin two years older than him, and Suprabha, quite alarmed, sent her son to Shantini-

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Even allowing for poetic licence in
opadhyay's rhapsody, Ray's position
the Bengali Pantheon is unchallenged.
e magic seems to work even in the 'other'
gal, across the international border. In
l, the Bangladesh TV put out *Hirok*
r Deshey; within days, the walls of
aka were chock-a-block with scribblings
the film's main songs. Milling crowds
side the Indian High Commission de-
ded tickets for the screening of three
movies in a local theatre.

In the film industry, coffee house and
club circles, he is known by his affec-
nate code name, *dhanga*, which simply
ans 'the tall one'. On a quiet Sunday
rning, when he stops his car to pick up a
book or a magazine, disbelieving
ds marvel at him in bemused silence.

Simple Themes: Ray reaches the heart
a receptive audience because of the sheer
plicity of his art. Never is a Ray film
ded with events. Viewing his *Mahanagar*
e Big City), wrote film critic Richard
ckel in *Life*: "It is always a trifle em-
rassing to set down, in an unadorned
ine, the story of one of Satyajit
y's films, for in that form they
erally seem too small, too
ple to support the critical en-
siasm they generate.... The
substance of his films lies bet-
en the plot lines, in the interac-
n of his almost Chekhovian
racters."

Ray meticulously follows the advice that Jean Renoir, the famous French film maker offered him in 1952. Renoir told him: "You don't have to have too many elements in a film, but whatever you use must be the right elements, the expressive elements." Earlier, at Shantiniketan, Nandalal Bose, the fabled art teacher, taught him the rudiments of Chinese calligraphy where "everything that comprises perceptible reality is observed, felt, analysed, and reduced to its basic form, basic texture, basic rhythm".

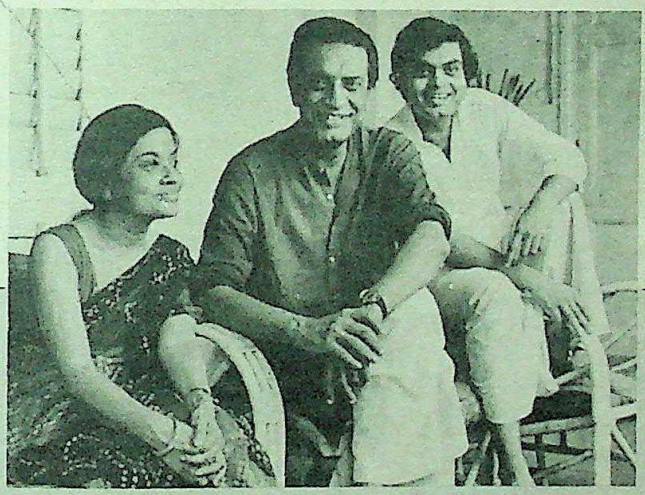
The choice of elements looks so simple and inevitable on screen; yet it involves a rigorous drill to which all members of Ray's production unit testify. Says Anil Chowdhury, Ray's production manager since *Pather Panchali*: "At one stage, we had nearly given up the idea of making *Charulata* for a reason which you may not believe to be true. We had acquired all the required 'properties' except the lorgnette that Charulata would hold. It had to be an authentic period lorgnette, but nobody apparently had it. We were thinking of somehow getting it made when I found exactly what we had wanted at the flea market near Sealdah."

Painstaking Effort: The chessboard in *Shatranj* was found after a monthlong search from Bal Mundkar, an advertising executive in Bombay who is a collector of antiques. The white horse in *Jalsaghar* was secured at double the cost, by also buying the buggy whch it drew on the streets of Calcutta. For securing the tape of only a couple of minutes of authentic Rajasthani folk music to be used in *Abhijan*, his 1962 film, Ray moved heaven and earth and finally secured it from the Sangeet Natak Akademi by the intervention of Indira Gandhi, then her father's hostess.

While writing a script, Ray keeps his eyes and ears open like a sleuth. The shooting script of *Aparajito*, written 27 years ago, has a striking marginal note scrawled out on the lefthand side of one of its pages. It asks: "Where the hell does Sarbajaya (Apu's mother) keep her money?"

Recalls Shankar, the best-selling Bengali novelist on whose stories Ray's *Seemabaddhwa* (Company Limited) and *Jana Aranya* were based: "There is a sequence in *Seemabaddhwa* where the hero's firm faces penalty because the electric fans that it makes have revealed manufacturing defects. Ray summoned me while scripting. He was agitated. He wanted to know where precisely the defects lay. In the armature? With the blades? Where?"

During the making of *Aranyer Din Ratri* (Days and Nights in the Forest), the writer of the story Sunil Gangopadhyay, was closely cross-examined on whether he



With wife Bijoya and son Sandip: close ties

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ketan, founded by Tagore, hoping that staying close to the poet might have some "therapeutic effect" on her son.

Artistic Inclinations: It did not. Tagore died a year later. Satyajit came back without finishing his graduate course in art; still he could spend three very fruitful years under-guidance of Nandalal Bose, the grat art teacher. And he married Bijoya in 1949, ten years after the romance had begun.

Ray joined the British advertising agency, D.J. Keymer, at a salary of Rs 85 a month, but within years became its art director. D.J. Keymer is the forerunner of Clarion Advertising Agency. At Keymer, he drew up campaigns for tea and biscuit, but carried on illustrating books and book-jackets on the side. His works revolutionised book design. Says Purnendu Pattrea, the most sought-after book designer in Bengal today: "Ray is to Bengali book designing what Newton is to modern science." An example of his cover design: a book on Jim Corbett had both the front and back covers done with yellow stripes; he put two bubbles, on the front-cover and at the back, which carried the title and the publisher's blurb; the bubbles looked like the entry and exit holes of a bullet.

Ray pawned Bijoya's jewellery to make *Pather Panchali*. Finally it was B.C. Roy, the former chief minister of West Bengal, and a member of the Brahmo Samaj, who bailed him out by authorising state finance. The film has brought the Government 20 times its investment.

The Brahmo Samaj idea of the family as a close-knit, almost as the nodal point of existence, marks Ray's personal life. He is a family man like very few in the tension-ridden show business really are. At all cultural and social functions, Bijoya, and son Sandip, 30, an aspiring film-maker, are in tow.

It is for Sandip that Ray began writing stories for young people. That was 20 years ago; now the little pastime has grown into a giant industry, earning him well over Rs 1 lakh annually in royalties. The stories have evolved their twin heroes: Professor Shonku, the laser gun-toting scientist who solves the riddles of creation; and Feluda, the gentle private eye who scours the country in search of mysteries. Both are among the best in their own genres.

FEBRUARY 15

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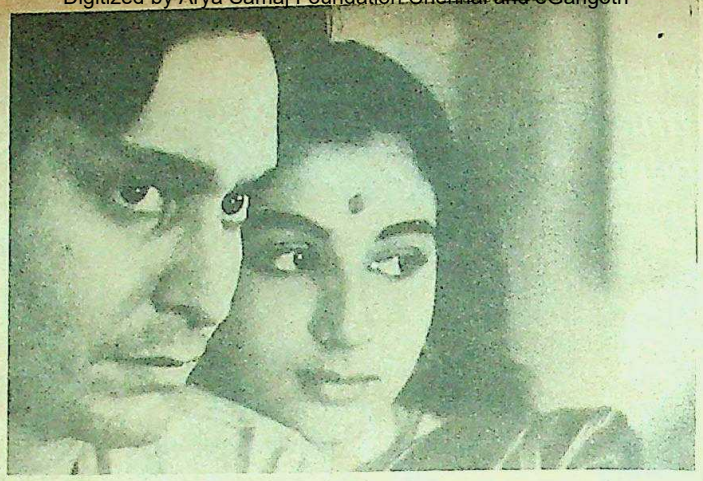
could suggest from which part of Calcutta did each of the four characters of the novel come. Says Ganguly: "I knew what Ray was getting at. Speech and social habits are widely divergent in Calcutta. But did I have it at the back of my mind while writing the story?"

Sensitive Feel: While scripting a story the first thing he would do is to sketch the layout of the set, because that "holds the key to the exposition of the characters". He believes that only the relevant external details could lead to the "inner weave of characters". So, he reads novels with a forensic zeal. While talking to people he seldom forgets to note an odd gesture or a telling turn of phrase. A friend recalls that after meeting a Congress minister in 1973 he could vividly mimic "the table-thumping, the head-shaking, the mispronunciations, and the tedious references to 'the leader'".

Such exposure no doubt came in handy for the brilliant portrayal of a Congress MLA in *Jana Aranya* who, with a satisfied grin, advised the jobseeking youth to "make sacrifices". It seemed particularly galling to Siddhartha Shankar Ray, then the West Bengal chief minister, who huffily left the theatre at the film's premiere. The two Rays are cousins and family friends.

However, such direct contacts with life are getting increasingly rare for Satyajit Ray, who is essentially a private person. He begins the day at 5 a.m., and, after a morning bath, plunges headlong into work, never leaving the study room (where he meets guests) till noon on the non-shooting days. His circle of friends is limited and are mostly upperclass. His true companions are his son Sandip, wife Bijoya, and sister-in-law Jaya, some 500 records and 4,000 books.

Cloistered Life: Apart from members of his unit (35 in all), he has innumerable acquaintances who call on him regularly. Without exception they are overawed by his personality and generally shrink into their shells in his presence. He often withdraws into himself. Says Goutam Ghosh, 30, whose film, *Dakhal*, got the President's Gold Medal last year: "I respect Manikda, but rarely do I enjoy a conversation with him. While talking he goes on doing his own work, and gives a feeling that the visitor is perhaps encroaching on his time."



A scene from *Apur Sansar* (top) and Ray shooting for *Jana Aranya* with assistant Suhasini Mulay: unforgettable creations

Many people believe that the lack of "real contact" with life shows in Ray's later works. Explains Ghosh: "In *Pratidwandi*, the Naxalite wears a predictable beard and displays, predictably, a copy of Che Guevara's diary. Why? Because he (Ray) has only heard about the Naxalites but never met many of them. Nowadays he only tries to know the reality but seldom experiences it."

Victor Bannerjee, who plays one of the two main characters in *Ghare Baire* and had the lead role in *Piku*, is equally forthright. Says Bannerjee: "In *Piku*, my role was entirely extraneous. I think Ray did not visualise the character in terms of flesh and blood." Making the same point, Chidananda Dasgupta, film maker and Ray's friend, said that "some of his recent films seem mannered because of his suffocating self-sufficiency". Dasgupta maintained that the two "real talents" in his unit, cameraman Subrata Mitra (who photographed *Pather Panchali*) and the late art director Bansi Chandragupta, left him at different stages because Ray preferred to "do everything himself". Added Pritish Nandy, the Anglo-Indian poet, that Ray "has been smothered with affection as with the scientist Satyen Bose", and added that "Bengal does not know how to respect its artist and yet allow him to retain his creative edge".

Subsuming Roles: Ray's production unit today is a one-way street with a clear line of command. The cameraman, Soumendu Roy, does not even have to compose a shot: Ray not only composes it for him but chooses the lens, the light and finally moves the camera himself. The editor, Dulal Datta, has his role limited to keeping the scissors and the film cement handy while Ray sits at the moviola. The art director, Ashok Bose, merely ensures that the planes are joined according to designs drawn by Ray to the last centimetre. He writes the film's score, and often plays the piano while a song is recorded, as he did this time when Kishore Kumar sang the songs for *Ghare Baire*.

In the process, Ray might have lost spontaneity, but the gains are not inconsequential. By grabbing all roles to himself he has brought the art of cinema as close as possible to the individualism of poetry, painting or music. Reminisces Madhabi Mukherjee: "It's so simple to work in a Ray film that you don't feel you're acting. You don't even have to think while acting." "Is it a good thing?" "It's good for the director. I don't know if it's good for the film."

But never do Ray's characters appear ordinary, humdrum or familiar. The Apu of *Apur Sansar* is not an introvert poet one would have met at the next table in a coffee house; Charulata is not the rich and beautiful housewife one would have accidentally encountered at the jeweller's shop. The uncommitted Siddhartha in *Pratidwandi* is unlikely to have a local habitation and a name, even though he etches a deep impression on the mind.

They are all extraordinary men and women strewn on the celluloid strips, dissimilar in their milieus and local context, but blood-relations in their generic trait. As Mrinal Sen, Ray's eminent contemporary, said: "When people asked Gustav Flaubert, who had served as the model for Emma Bovary, he replied: 'Emma? C'est moi.' Ray too can say: Charulata? that's I."

—SUMIT MITRA

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ILY PLANNING

njection Of Hope

FAMILY planning in India has always been dogged by a debilitating combination of moral, sociological, superstitious and even political plexes. Post-1977, however, while the n's population control effort has ac- ed the coy appellation of 'family wel- , encouraging work has been done to- ds adopting newer and safer techniques irth control.

Last fortnight Dr Badri Nath na, deputy director-general of Indian Council for Medical arch (ICMR) announced that cli- l trials of a new injectible con- ptive for women, effective for months, had been successfully d on a sample group of 2,600 en in 14 centres around the ntry.

Encouraging Results: The wo- selected for the programme between the ages of 20 and 35, hy, had at least one child, and non-lactating. The final success worked out to 62 women per with 11 women in every 100 ear discontinuing because of norrhoea (stoppage of menstrual ds), and 18 women out of 100 discontinuing because of ular bleeding.

The drug, called norethisterone nthate, and commercially mar- d, had been tested ear- n 1977, but a dissatis- ry failure began in 1980, and 'recruit- of the women in- d took 14 months. As y as 8,500 women- th cycles have been nsively studied.

Saxena, 45, heads the 's National Program- or Research in Human roduction, begun in 1980. The 1977 ex- ment consisted of e-monthly injections of milligrams of norethis- e oenanthate; this time around, all women were initially administered the ctions once every two months for six ths. Half of them then switched to a e-month regimen.

Anticipated Success: By June this year researchers hope to conclusively prove if a woman is 'primed' for an initial six-month period and then switches to a more cost-beneficial three-month regimen, the results do not differ from the two-month regimen. The 1977 experiment showed that most pregnancies occurring in the sample group were in the first six months.

Tests with norethisterone oenanthate are also being conducted simultaneously in 80 other countries under the auspices of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The drug is marketed mainly by the multinational Schering, and costs between Rs 27 and Rs 45 per injection. Its action results in inhibition of ovulation in the user woman over a two- or three-month period. The ICMR has, however, been told by the Government of India that prices can be reduced substantially once the drug is mass-marketed.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Norethisterone oenanthate ampoules: safe technique

"Increasingly, the Government realises the tremendous value of basic research in population control and the search for better methods than the time-tested spacing method, condoms, IUDs or pills."

—DR BADRI NATH SAXENA

The injectible contraceptive compares well with oral contraceptives and intrauterine devices (IUD's), which have a success rate of only 30 or 40 per 100. Currently, the ICMR is also researching the efficacy of monthly injections of 50 milligrams of norethisterone oenanthate combined with between 2.5 and 5 milligrams of either of two natural oestrogens—the oestradiols valerate and cypionate—since natural oestrogens do not carry the danger of thrombo-embolic, or clotting, side-effects. By the end of this year, the researchers hope to have a good idea of the efficacy of this mixture.

Varied Research: Aside from an advisory group on contraceptives, the ICMR is aided by task forces engaged in time-bound programmes on hormonal contraceptives, male contraception, female sterilisation, medical termination of pregnancy (MTP), IUD's, standardisation of laboratory methods and national quality control programmes, and psychosocial and health services research. The work ranges from basic clinical research to field and epidemiological research, and members consist of scientists and technocrats around the country. In addition, a Human Ethical Research Committee has to approve every human clinical trial, and a Toxicology Review Panel examines every new drug before it goes up to the Drugs Controller of India for final approval.

The ICMR's famil planning research effort is helped by three regional centres for chemical research in human reproduction at Calcutta, Madras and Gauhati, three basic research centres at Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Ludhiana, and 22 human reproduction research centres in medical colleges' obstetrics and gynaecology departments around the country. The Institute for Research in Reproduction (IRR) in Bombay, an affiliate of the ICMR, has also done considerable work in the field of basic research.

"Increasingly," says Saxena, "the Government realises the tremendous value of basic research in population control and the search for better methods than the time-tested spacing method, condoms IUD's, or pills. For instance, we have tested

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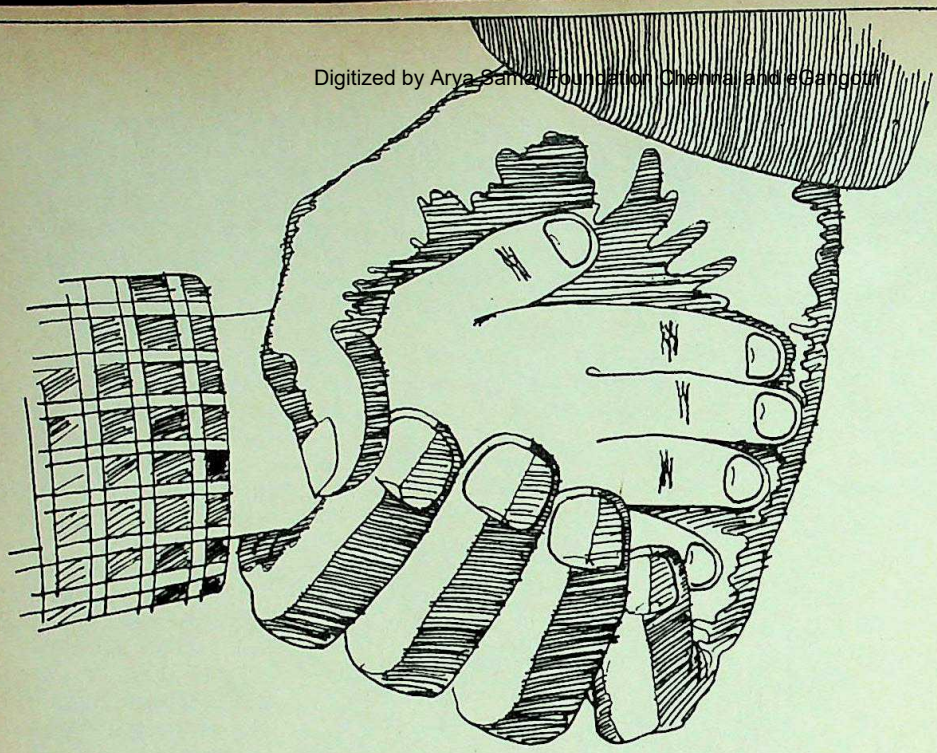

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Copper-T200 device and recommended it is better than the plastic Lippe's p IUD introduced in the early 1960s. Government IUD factory at Kanpur has n marketing Copper-T 220s."

Determined Safeguards: After re-ching possible side-effects of oral con-eptives, the ICMR found that malnou-d women were in no greater danger uffering adverse side-effects than well-rished women. Nevertheless, it has gi- the Union Ministry of Health and ily Welfare a comprehensive check-list igns and symptoms that even a para-ical worker can tick off with women in l areas, with the proviso that the user hen must be seen by a medical prac-ner once every three months.

"As regards female sterilisation," says na, "we studied 32,000 women and ined data that indicates that mini-rotomy using the modified Pomeroy's nique is the best method for our ls, and has the least complications if e in the post-partum period im-iately after delivery of a child. We also recommended that laparoscopic lisation should be confined only to e centres where trained manpower is lable. Elsewhere, we have proven that the fears of vasectomies on men resulting in cardio-vascular or atherosclerotic side-effects is not substantiated."

In the case of MTP's, legalised since 1972, the ICMR found that abortion in the first trimester (less than 12 weeks after conception) is safest, but that vacuum suction should be preceded by slow cervical dilation. Here again, the Central Drug Research Institute at Lucknow has developed an isabgol-based cervical dilator that is as effective and less expensive than the presently imported seaweed-based dilator from Japan called 'laminaria tent'. For second-trimester MTPs, the ICMR is working on the prostaglandin 'E' series drug in collaboration with the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm and the WHO; Karolinska is also negotiating with the Government of India for marketing of vaginal suppositories that can enable women to perform early abortions at home.

Substantial Advantages: Pregnancies are usually confirmable only if two consecutive periods are missed, says Saxena, and most women used to rush for MTPs only when one period had been missed, leading to a 30 per cent false alarm rate. Now, the IRR in Bombay has developed the 'Nancy Kit', marketed by Hindustan Antibiotics Limited, which uses simple-to-use enzyme-linked amino-acids to indicate whether conception has occurred or not.

During the next few years, says Saxena, family planning research ought to result in substantial new advantages for the country. Already the ICMR had conducted tests using the Norplant-I six-wing sylastic sub-cutaneous implant for women, but the fan-shaped contraceptive worked out expensive—so 100 women in Delhi and Calcutta are currently undergoing tests with the cheaper two-wing Norplant-II.

The IRR and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore have also isolated a substance called inhibin, which suppresses the Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) in both males and females. Research is also going on into the side-effects of hormonal male contraceptives, which usually aim at azoospermia (total suppression of sperm).

"Everywhere we look," says Saxena, "there is hope that these efforts will help us achieve our population targets. Only when we bring down the birth rate from 33 per thousand to 21, and more and more couples in the country realise that contraception is a safe and easy method of preventing babies, will this national campaign bear fruit." —CHAITANYA KALBAG

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SIBERIAN CRANE

Struggle For Survival

FOR CENTURIES, cranes have been held up as auspicious birds in many countries, serving as symbols of long life and happiness. Ironically, however, the graceful Siberian crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) is in grave danger of being reduced to total extinction—only around 250 of these birds exist world-wide today. The crane family, *Gruidae*, itself is the most endangered among birds today: of 15 species extant, seven are very close to extinction.

The Siberian crane is distinguished by black primary feathers on its wing-tips, bright yellow eyes, and a large patch of bare red skin on its forehead. Adult 'Sibes', as they are fondly known by conservationists, can stand 4.5 ft tall and have wing-spreads of 7 ft. Remarkably, after travelling more than 6,000 km from the icy wastes of Siberia, the Siberian crane settles down from mid-November to mid-March every year in its winter quarters at only one spot in India—the Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary near Bharatpur in Rajasthan.

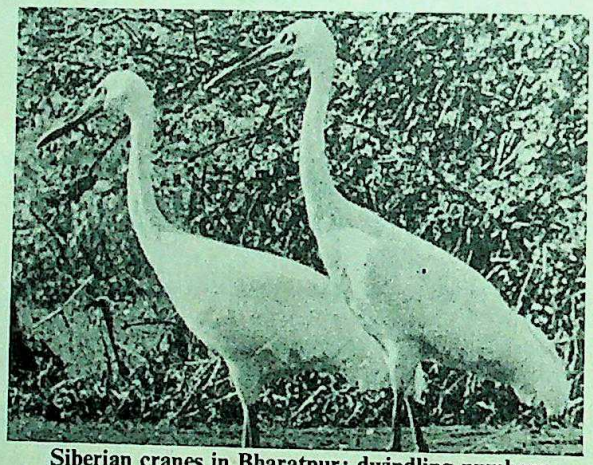
Alarming Decline: This winter's population of Sibes at Bharatpur, conservationists have noted with alarm, numbers only 33 adults and five chicks, the lowest in the last five years. Over the last decade, ornithologists, conservationists and biologists from all over the world have cooperated to try and increase the bird's precarious numbers across the globe.

Situated 176 km from Delhi, the 29 sq km Keoladeo Ghana sanctuary attracts as many as 330 species of birds to its large stretches of fresh water, criss-crossed by dykes and fed by two rivers. A former shooting preserve of the Maharajas of Bharatpur, Keoladeo was taken over by the Forest Department in 1972. But an increasing salinity in the soil and nearby wells, as well as cattle-grazing, have led to a drop in migratory populations.

In 1976, Ronald Sauey of the International Crane Foundation (ICF), Shahid Ali from the Bombay Natural History Society and John McGough of Cornell University found that the Siberian cranes favour Bharatpur because they find their favourite food there—the hard black tuber of the sedge *Cyperus rotundus*, which grows underground in the watered areas of the sanctuary. The birds therefore spend all day digging into the mud, their heads, necks and legs completely submerged in water, rooting for their food.

The Siberian crane breeds in the inhospitable Arctic tundra stretching from the Ural Mountains to Yakutia in eastern Siberia. Every winter, the larger of two migratory flocks travels east to the wet marshes of Lake Poyang bordering the lower reaches of the Yangtze river in China. The western flock, breeding near the lower reaches of the Ob river in Siberia, travels through Iran and Afghanistan before touching down at Bharatpur. Diligent tracking has shown that the Siberian cranes favour resting places at Lake Parishan in Iran's Caspian lowlands and Lake Ab-i-Estada in south-eastern Afghanistan.

Adverse Conditions: Wetland drainage, and hunting, have decimated Siberian cranes alarmingly—the cranes' sweetmeat is considered a delicacy in many countries—and the Islamic revolution in Iran and the turmoil that has gripped Afghanistan since the Soviet occupation have hindered conservation efforts. Monogamous birds that live as long as man, Siberian cranes take time to choose their mates; they need shallow wetland, and a breeding territory that the pair vigorously defends. But very few chicks survive.



Siberian cranes in Bharatpur: dwindling numbers

Since 1973, the ICF at Baraboo in Wisconsin in the US has helped in nurturing the dwindling Siberian population. The ICF's efforts have also succeeded in raising the population of the whooping crane in the US and Canada, which numbered only 15 in 1941, to over 100 today, and of the red-crested crane in Japan, whose population had plummeted to 30 in 1952, to over 300 today.

In late 1977, Soviet biologists picked up four Siberian crane eggs from nests in Yakutia and sent them on a 10,000 km journey to Wisconsin, where they all hatched. This experiment was repeated in 1978. In June 1981, Dushenka (little love one in Russian) became the first Siberian crane chick hatched in captivity; the same year the Bharatpur sanctuary was declared a national park by the Government of India. In tribute to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's interest, ICF Director George Archibald named the second Sibe born in captivity Gandhi in May 1982.

Marathon Effort: "Siberian cranes are the most endangered of all migratory birds," says Archibald, "and they're being shot for food during the fighting in Afghanistan and Iran." In 1982, after years spent in 'mating' dances with a temperamental female whooping crane called Tex, Archibald finally witnessed the birth of her first chick, named Gee Whiz after Dr George Gee who had helped obtain the semen that inseminated Tex.

The Siberian crane's soft, fluting call has been gradually drowned out by the more raucous cries of the larger and aggressive Sarus crane in India. At Bharatpur in February, India, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, China and the USSR are slated to sign an agreement on conservation of this vanishing species. The ICF has meanwhile established a captive flock of 14 birds at Wisconsin; three years ago the Russians began building a crane breeding centre at the Oka Reserve near Moscow. Three more chicks have been born at the ICF in captivity last year.

India seems an appropriate venue for ensuring the species' survival—Ustad Mansur, a 17th century court painter for Mughal Emperor Jehangir, had painted a remarkable likeness of the Siberian crane a full century before it was scientifically identified by German ornithologist Peter S. Pallas. And now, with a full-fledged Department of Environment entrusted with the task of ensuring the survival of wildlife and its habitat, the Siberian crane promises to be as prolific as the tiger.

From February 7 to 10, Bharatpur will host an International Crane Workshop, sponsored by the Government of Rajasthan, the ICF, and the Department of Environment. Sixty-five delegates from 23 countries will meet to discuss plans for international cooperation in aiding migratory cranes that traverse thousands of kilometres and many countries in their annual winter journeys. The Siberian crane will occupy centre-stage in this crucial discussion.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

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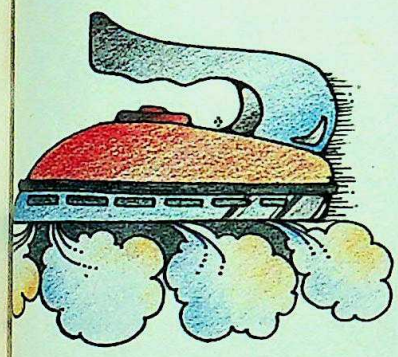

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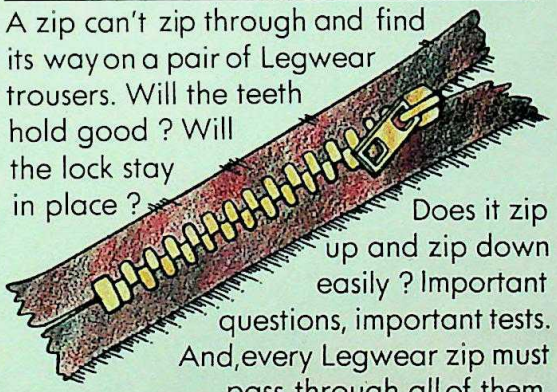

Does it zip up and zip down easily? Important questions, important tests. And, every Legwear zip must pass through all of them.

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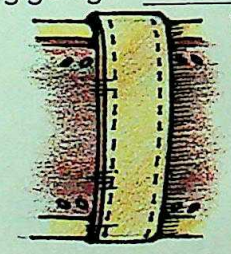

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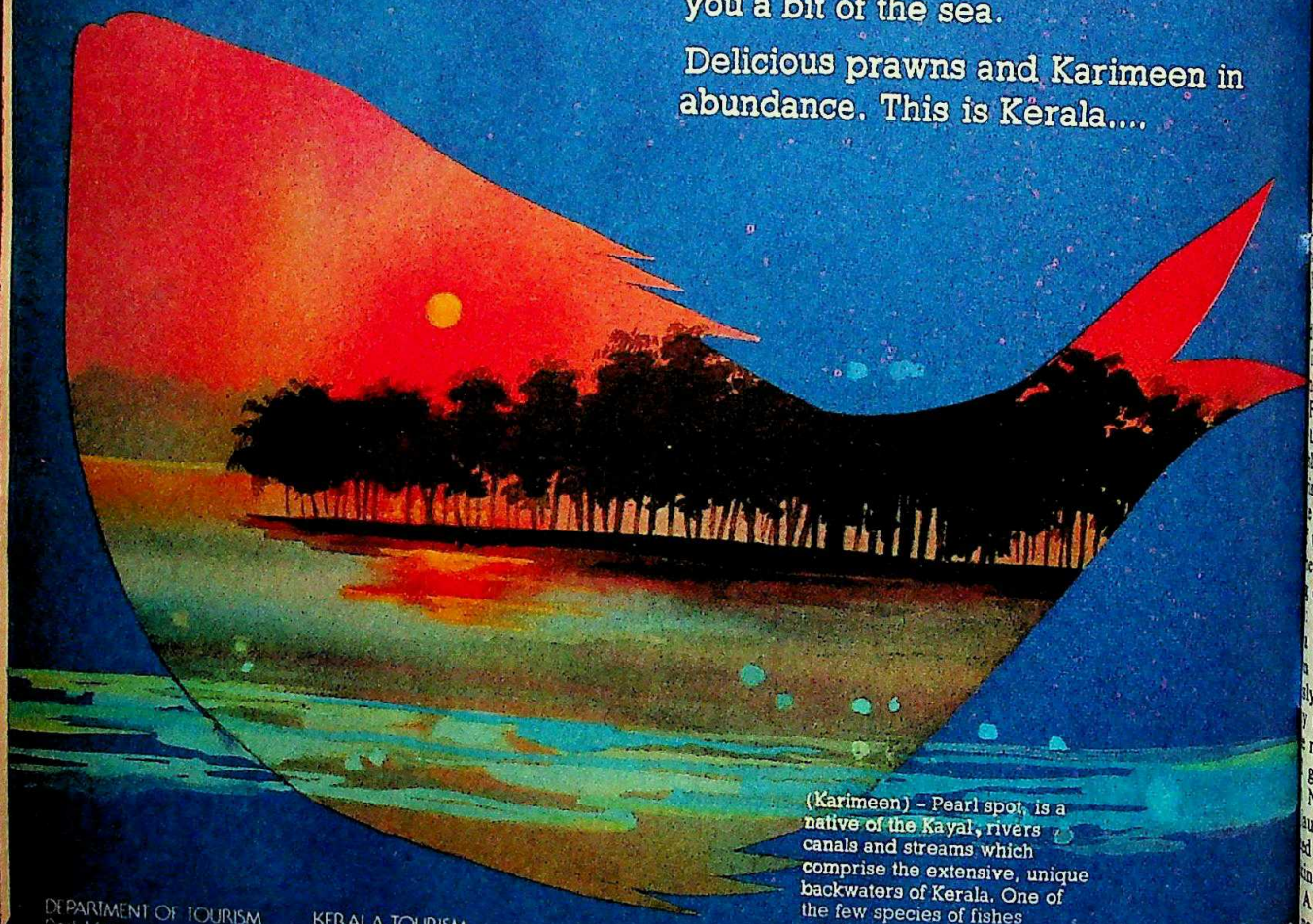
Kerala

KAYAL ... Lake

A vast expanse of blue. Quiet, but for the occasional boat that glides past. Hemmed in by glinting green coconut palms .... brilliant sunshine all over. The water gives you a bit of the sea.

Delicious prawns and Karimeen in abundance. This is Kerala....



(Karimeen) - Pearl spot, is a native of the Kayal, rivers canals and streams which comprise the extensive, unique backwaters of Kerala. One of the few species of fishes exhibiting parental care, its eggs are laid in carefully constructed earthen nests. Both the male and the female guard over the nest till the eggs hatch. The fish is served as a delicacy in all classes of hotels and restaurants throughout Kerala.

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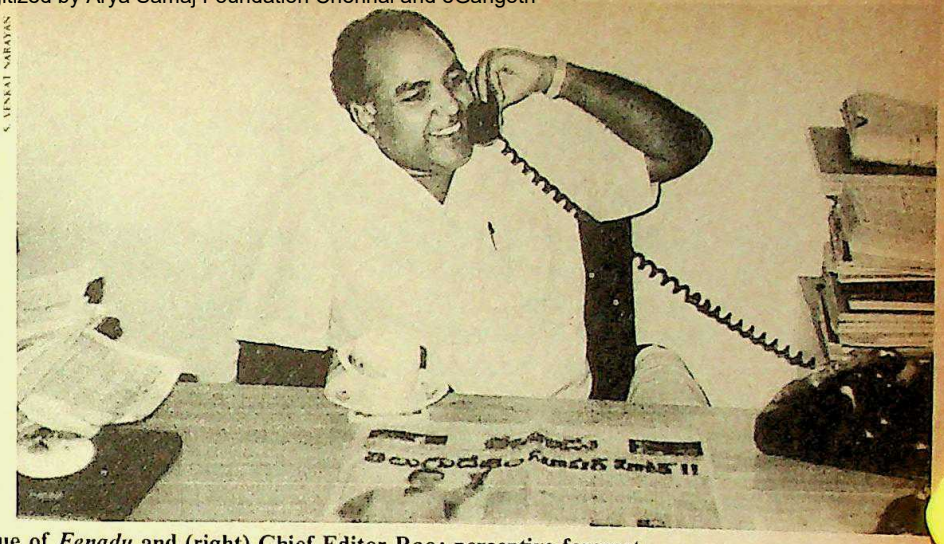

S. VENKAT NARAYAN

Post-election issue of *Eenadu* and (right) Chief Editor Rao: perceptive forecast

DU

acking A Winner

NE man who was not taken by surprise when Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao swept to power was ukuri Ramoji Rao, the owner and editor of the Telugu daily, *Eenadu*. the day Rama Rao made his politispirations known nine months ago, aper has thrown its considerable weibehind his campaign. Says Ramoji "I wrote off the possibility of Mrs hi doing anything good for the coun in 1977. I have been searching for an ative ever since."

From the moment it became clear the Telugu Desam was heading for a ide win, streams of visitors have been ng into the *Eenadu* offices to congra- Ramoji Rao. And in the newspaper there is no doubt that the changing e guards in the state has been some- of a personal success. Says Ramoji "We backed the opposition parties long time but they were in no po- to match her. Two years ago, I seiy thought of launching a regional y myself and toyed with the idea for months. I wasn't sure it would work. gave it up. I had several discussions NTR stretching over a month after aunched Telugu Desam. I was cond that he was serious. We started ing him since then."

A photographer and reporter from paper accompanied NTR on his marn campaign trails and dutifully reporvery word he uttered with huge and ving photographs.

Imaginative Campaign: Launched eiyears ago in the port city of Vishakhapatnam, *Eenadu* is now also published from Hyderabad, Vijayawada and Tirupati. Written in crisp Telugu with catchy headlines and big photographs, it soon captured the imagination of Telugu readers. With an impressive circulation of 3.5 lakh and a readership of 35 lakh people, it created a remarkable impression of NTR on its readers' minds.

The paper has a network of 250 correspondents, including 50 full-timers, spread all over the state. All the four editions employ about a thousand people, including 150 field marketing staff. It has also teleprinter connections with most of the 23 district headquarters in the state. This gave a tremendous edge during the election and it was frequently hours ahead of everybody else with the latest results. And even at other times, it is the first newspaper to reach all major places by 6 in the morning. The circulation jumped from 2,30,000 last June to 3,50,000 last month.

It was through *Eenadu* that the Telugus came to know all about how NTR was travelling, roughing it in a refurbished 1938 Chevrolet van, making speeches and galvanising the people with his oratorial skills. It was through this paper that people came to know that NTR slept in his van, shaved and bathed in the open by the road-side and ate with Harijans and danced with tribal women and offered words of comfort to old people and so on.

Ramoji Rao also did his bit in preparing the party's manifesto while his advertising agency designed hoardings and other publicity material for the new-born party.

Leftist intellectuals like Gajjela Malla Reddy and poets like Kondaveeti Venkata Kavi wrote stirring poems, reminding the readers of the glorious past of the Telugus as well as the misdeeds of the Congress(I) in the state. They would end their lines by asking readers to vote for Telugu Desam because "Anna"—the word means elder brother and NTR is referred to as such by his admirers—had promised to make the Telugus a great race once again.

Final Message: On January 1, *Eenadu* published results of an opinion poll conducted by its own staff. It gave between 175 and 225 seats to Telugu Desam and between 50 and 80 seats to the Congress(I). In its inimitable fashion, the paper advised Congress(I) ministers to get ready to pack up and leave.

On election day, Ramoji Rao ran a signed editorial on the front page appealing to the people to vote for Telugu Desam. He followed it up the next day by explaining why the paper campaigned for Telugu Desam and assuring the readers that whoever came to power, it would continue to serve the interests of the state and its people.

On January 7, the newspaper printed a staggering 5,40,000 copies giving the news of N.T. Rama Rao's victory under a banner that read: "Telugu Desam—A Super Hit!" Currently the paper is printing 4,00,000 copies a day but the chief editor feels the circulation will stabilise at 3,50,000 copies. Is the phenomenal increase in circulation because of Telugu Desam and the election? Says he: "The election may have got us about 50,000 copies. The rest is due to our meticulous marketing techniques."

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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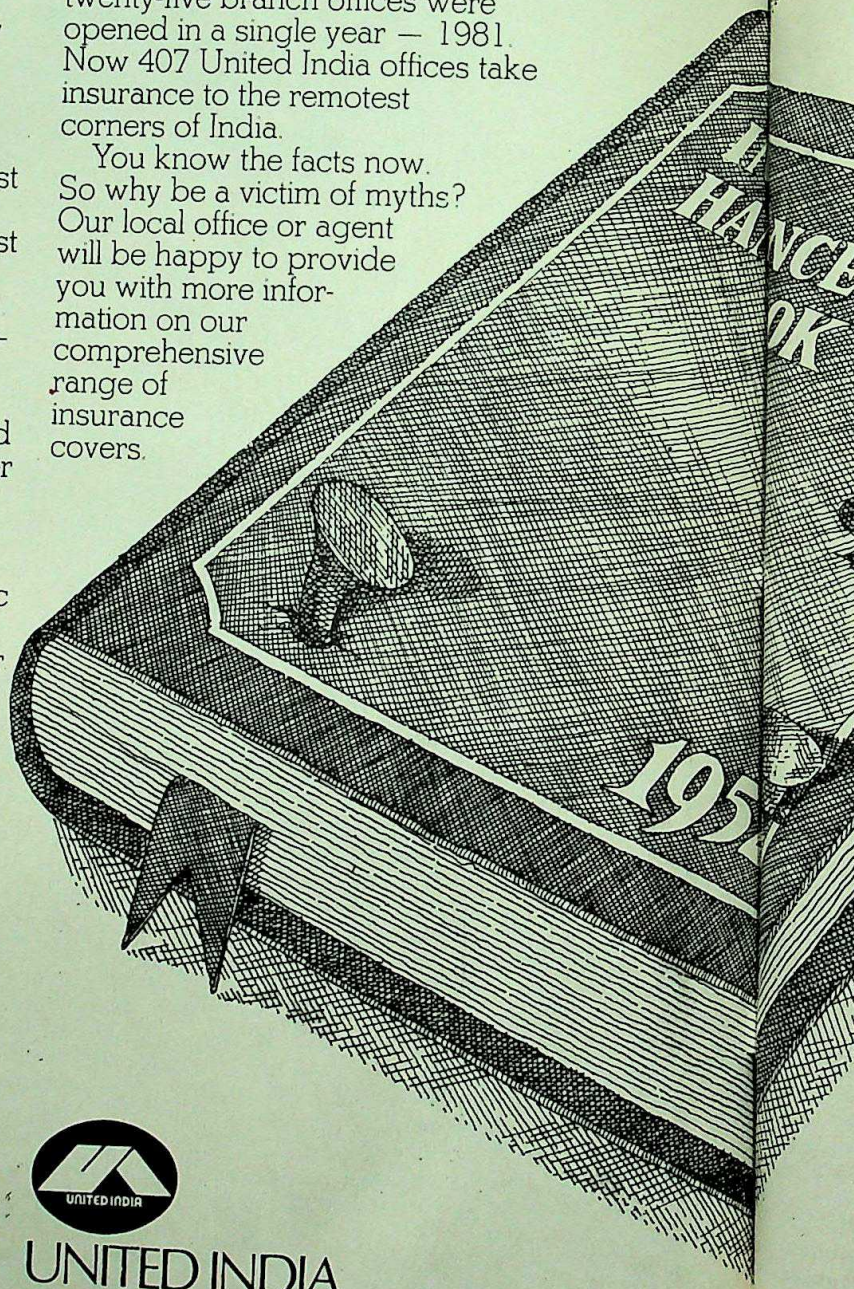

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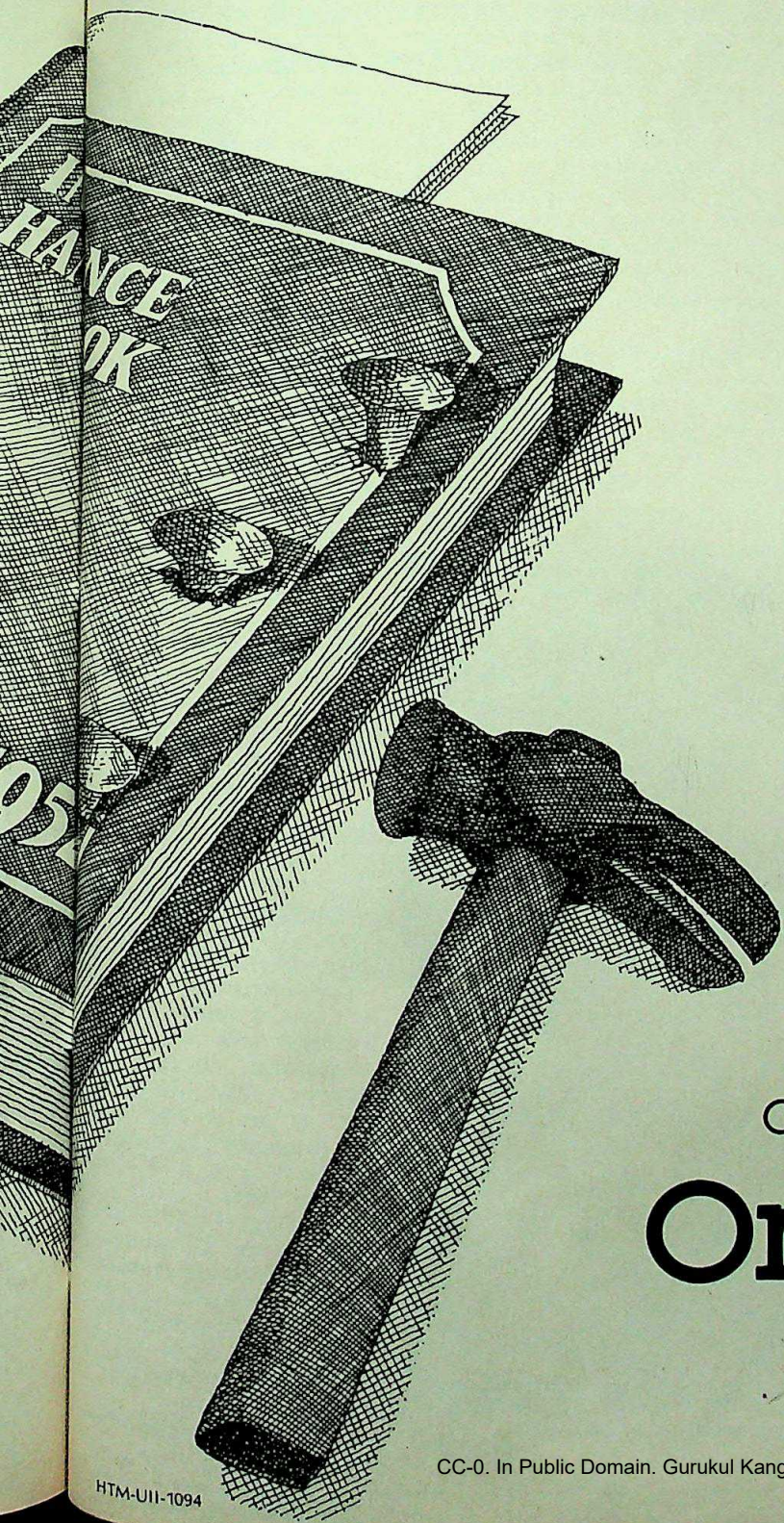

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THEFT

Stealing From The Gods

IT DOES not do to trifle with the gods. Or so at least it seemed when the police announced that the men who had stolen temple gold from the sanctum sanctorum of the Vishwanath temple, one of the most well known in Varanasi, had been caught. The police also said that less than two weeks after the crime was committed they had managed to recover the stolen property from two towns in nearby Rohtas district in Bihar.

But while the case appeared to be neatly wound up, the police admit that there are still some loose ends to be tied up. The five men who robbed the temple have all been involved in dacoities earlier. The other six are goldsmiths who received the stolen property. Four of the men are from Rohtas district and the rest are from Chakia-Varanasi and Mirzapur districts. Last fortnight police were still trying to determine whether there was any connection, between the arrested men and one of the four mahants of the Vishwanath temple, Kailashpati Tiwari, who had earlier been arrested and then released on bail.

Initial Beliefs: Initially the police clung to the belief that the crime could not have been committed without some inside assistance. Before arresting 15 suspects on January 23, Balbir Singh Bedi, deputy inspector general of police, in Varanasi, had said that, "the crime is obviously an inside job". This view was based on the fact that there were no visible signs that the sanctum sanctorum lock had been forced. Two of the Vishwanath temple's heavy grill doors had also been found open. The two pujaris who were on guard that night claimed that they had fallen asleep and had heard nothing all night.

While they slept the criminals stripped away nearly 2 kg of gold plate embedded in the sunken vaginal *argha* which serves as a base, in the centre of which is fixed the black stone Shivalinga. Also stolen the same night was the silver *mukut* (crown) from the Sat Nayan temple which is within the same complex. The value of the property was estimated at Rs 4 lakh altogether and is the sixth theft of its kind in the temple. And besides this, Bedi added, "several of these pujaris have at one time or another been arrested in connection with previous thefts in this temple and also suspended but they were somehow later reinstated by one of the mahants."

Many who are familiar with the temple say that there is ample evidence of the heavy depredations that have been going on in the temple. The silver-panelled doors have been scraped and cut out, the corner edges of the smoked gold sheets covering the stone *shikhar* (tower) of the Vishwanath temple have been bent and broken. The silver coins embedded in the chequered black and white marble courtyard are missing and even the precious silver ornaments adorning the lifesize Nandi bull have been stolen.

Administrative Mess: The administration of the temple has for years now been in shambles. Its earnings from cash offerings and donations are said by outsiders to exceed Rs 60,000 a month. But there are no records to prove this since no statement of accounts or expenditure is available, and no classified list of assets has been prepared. There is not even a wri record of the temple staff, and mahants claim that the temple's d earnings are only Rs 70.

The pujaris, however, can hardly blamed for the pathetic state of aff They are paid next to nothing and t monthly salaries—if they can be ca that—range between Rs 2 and Rs 5.

The temple itself is said to be the vate property of four mahants—Ra shankar, Krishnashankar, Vijayshan and Kailashpati—who have for deca been fighting court battles for the do nant say in the temple's management. case filed by Kailashpati against the o three is still pending in the Supre Court. Until that is decided, the four bound by a 1953 ruling which decreed t the daily temple collections should be stributed equitably.

The infighting has forced the Gove ment to appoint an investigating offi under the 1976 Uttar Pradesh Public R gious Institutions (Prevention of Dissi tion of Properties) Act. Says Trin Mishra, the city police chief: "I rea don't know who is more to blame."

Since the mahants are not witho clout, investigating the case h been awkward. Kailashpati is s to be distantly related to Lok Tripathi, the state health minis Kailashpati, however, denies th he has any political influence a when met in jail said: "Do y think I would be in jail if I h political patronage? I am bei framed."

Though he is now out bail, Kailashpati still has to e plain how a gold plated chatt was recovered from an unused w in his house. The police a using skilled divers to search t tiny well in the hope of recoveri more stolen property.

Last fortnight, the state G vernment took over the temple management through an dinance. This had been the air for a long time now In December Kailashpati cam to blows with a rival in fro of the state Governor C.P.N Singh. Singh is said to have rema ked that the Government woul have to seriously consider takin over the management of the temp if this was the state of affairs. Th theft did its bit to persuade th authorities that God's property wa safer in their hands.

—ANAND SAGAR in Varana

S. PREMI

The Shivalinga at the Vishwanath temple

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BIGGER AND BETTER

RELIANCE Textile Industries, now the fourth largest private sector company in the country, continues to burn up the track with its blistering growth record. Close on the heels of the commissioning of its polyester filament yarn plant at Patalganga in Maharashtra, the company has set its sights on still bigger projects. One is to set up a second yarn plant in Karnataka, which if approved will take the company's total yarn capacity from 10,000 to 25,000 tonnes annually. A second project under negotiation is a Rs 25 crore polyester film project costing Rs 25 crore, possibly in collaboration with ICI of Britain. Other new lines of production, aimed at further vertical integration of the company's operations, are also under consideration, notably in the chemicals line. A plant for making TPA, the raw material for polyester yarn, is already on the anvil. At least one of the new projects is likely to be promoted by a new company that will be floated for the purpose by Reliance Chairman Dhirubhai Ambani.

ECTOR'S DUES

HE LONG-EXPECTED and much-delayed hike in the ceilings on company directors' pay and perquisites seems round the corner at last. This follows recent government ons that have raised first the dearness allowances of senior nment officials and then the salary scales of senior public executives. In contrast, private sector salary ceilings have in operation for well over a decade, and were in fact d by the Janata government in 1978. The Government is oncerned over reports that unrecorded cash payments are rly made to senior executives by an increasing number of anies, which see no other way of rewarding those who m. The practice, in some cases, is understood to have ated to middle management cadres. The Government now rs to be veering round to the view that the official salary s should be hiked before the malpractices become more pread and entrenched.

RLESS PROPOSAL

HE CALCUTTA-BASED Peerless General Finance and Investment Company has sent the Finance Ministry into a flutter with its proposal to formally enter the life insurance ss, which has been nationalised for over a quarter of a y. Peerless is banking on the support of Finance Minister b Mukherjee, who comes from West Bengal, and is getting ress(I) stalwarts from the state to lobby on its behalf. als in the ministry have been trying to stonewall the pro- but company spokesmen claim they have received faint s of encouragement. One body that is unimpressed is the e Bank of India (RBI) which has questioned the basis on the company runs its existing business. An RBI committee ound that the company makes most of its money from deposit policies: over 40 per cent of new policies are found se in any given year.

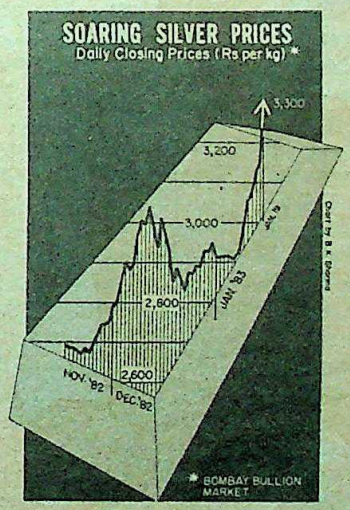
W HORIZONS

NGINEERING specialists Larsen & Toubro (L & T) are on an aggressive expansion drive. The company has already entered shipping and cement, and is expanding both lines of y: proposing to acquire three new ships at a cost of Rs 50 crore, o double its cement capacity to 2.2 million tonnes. Apart from L & T is considering an entry into two entirely new areas: oil ction (related activity rigs, drilling platforms, and other ment) and high technology areas, the possibilities being puters, electronics and even robots.

SOFT SELLING

MODERN Bakeries, for long a poor third in the battle for the carbonated drinks market, is now set to launch a fresh assault for a bigger market share. Diversifying into the fruit juice business, the company has received official clearance to set up a pineapple juice concentrate plant in Assam, which the state Government will feed with the help of new pineapple plantations in Cachar district. Modern Bakeries also plans to offer "mixed fruit punches", while it is waiting for clearance from the Government to go in for yet another new line of activity: non-alcoholic beer. When the new products are on the market, Modern Bakeries will have transformed itself into the most diversified soft drinks company in the country.

SILVER SPARKLE



SILVER has taken the shine off gold in the bullion markets. Though the latter has seen a sudden upsurge in global trading, domestically it is silver which has been climbing steadily up the price graph: from a relatively modest Rs 2,695 per kilogram in early November to the dizzy height of Rs 3,330 on January 18. That is a rise of almost 25 per cent in barely 11 weeks. With the market so volatile, the stock market disease of traders/brokers being unable to pay up has now spread to the bullion trade. But speculators expect the white metal to retain its new sparkle.

PLACE IN THE SUN

THE GIANT public sector Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) is spreading its net wider in the energy area by diversifying into solar energy. Having operated various pilot facilities in a number of solar energy applications since the early '70s, including a fairly major heating system at its Hardwar plant, BHEL has now got official clearance for manufacturing solar cells as well as photo-voltaic systems. The new manufacturing facility is likely to be located in Karnataka. But solar energy will play only a very small part in BHEL's total operations.

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GROWTH

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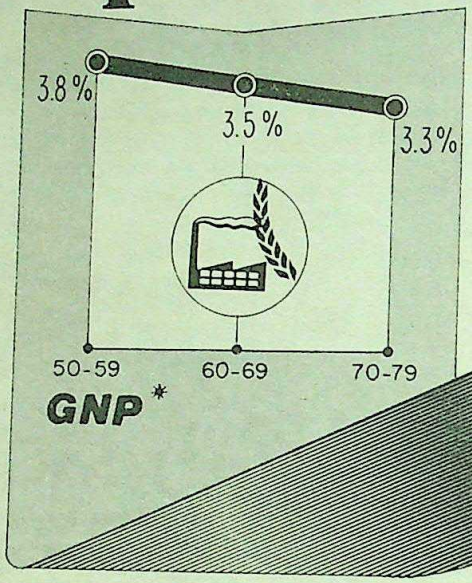
Down The Up Staircase

POLITICIANS are notoriously short-sighted, finance ministers, their eyes glued to the next budget, even more so. For a finance minister in the throes of budget making—his second dab at the annual exercise—Pranab Mukherjee has been unusually forthcoming. He has been talking to industrialists and businessmen up and down the country without mincing words. It is obvious that most of his calculations in the last budget have gone awry, partly because the calculations themselves were wrong but also because the economy is behaving increasingly as if it had gone out of control. In fact, many people believe that it *has* gone out of control, that the Government has little hold over it and all attempts to manoeuvre it back on the rails are doomed. These people also say that Pranab Mukherjee's next budget excercise will be no different from the last, and, in fact, may be worse, since he will have to work without the comforting cushion of the huge IMF loan which would have been fully drawn before the year closes.

The finance minister must be wondering where on earth the loan has gone. Its only visible impact has been on prices which have indeed been held in check. But then prices have been coming down all over the world, including countries that have not had access to IMF or other lending bodies. What has brought down prices is not the loan—although imports made through the loan have helped—but the all-pervading economic weather of recession. The credit squeeze and the year-long textile strike in Bombay have also helped. In fact, one wonders whether the Government—Central Government, that is, for Babasaheb Bhosale himself has been in *purdah*—has not used the strike as another handy weapon against inflation, and may have been, for this reason, very reluctant to intervene.

When he sits down to balance his books, the finance minister will notice that he has overspent by a margin of Rs 3,500 crore, Rs 1,500 crore more than he had bargained for. This is, however, not so serious a matter as the fact that the Planning Commission is said to be cutting back savagely on its plan outlays (for 1983-84) by something like 15 to 20 per cent—the exact figure is not available. It says something for the way we manage

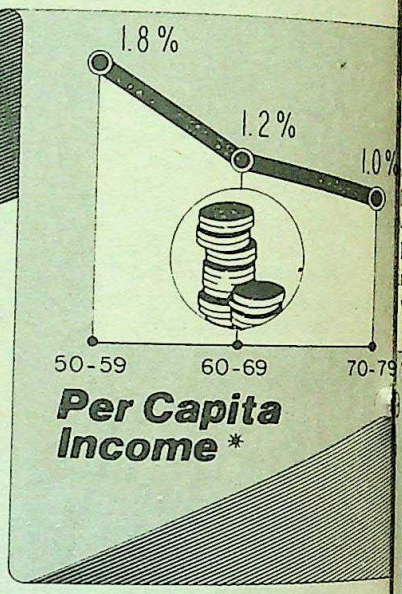


our resources that while we seem to have all the money in the world for the Asiad and other extravaganzas, we are short of funds for precisely those kinds of activities that sustain development. A year or so ago, it was the businessmen who were complaining that they were short of cash. Now it is the turn of the Government which finds, on the very eve of the budget, that its till is empty.

Money Shortage: Is there perhaps some connection between the crunch in the Central treasury and the earlier credit squeeze that made a hole in every businessman's pocket? Are we, as a nation, short of money and cannot really make both ends meet? Inflation is also a kind of adulteration and so is black money. The fact that the Government had to step in and pick up black money officially through bearer bonds is an admission that the Government too, like the vast number of other enterprises up and down the country, cannot balance its books without adulterated money. The growing pollution in the economy has at last caught up with the South Block granite.

But adulterated money cannot sustain an economy any more than watered milk can sustain a child. The crunch arises from the fact that, despite all signs of prosperity, all the real 'growth' signals point downwards. We are producing more than we ever did, we are also eating and living better, we are saving more than we did 30 years ago, but somehow the social and economic mechanism is not functioning as well as it did years ago and perceptibly slowing down. Twenty y from now it may even crawl to a d stop.

Take the gross national prod (GNP), the sum of all our economic effo The growth rate has declined steadily fr 3.8 per cent (a year) in the '50s to 3.5 cent in the '60s and 3.3 per cent in '70s. You may say that the GNP is far vague a concept to indicate accurately progress of a nation. All right, take



riculture and industry, the two sect where measurements cannot be fudg The rate of growth of agriculture was per cent in the '50s, 2.2 per cent in following decade and 1.5 per cent in '70s. (These are not my figures; they taken from an excellent article by Madh Pavaskar in *Economic Times*). What means is that the rate of growth of riculture in the '70s is just about half that 20 years ago. In just two decades, pace of production on the farm front slumped by 50 per cent despite our gre revolution and other efforts at modern ing that sector.

In industry, the figures are not alarming, but should cause anxiety no etheless. The annual rate of growth h slowed down from 5.5 per cent in the '5 to 5 per cent in the '60s and further dow to 4 per cent in the '70s, a 30 per cent fa in 20 years. A good year is invariab followed by a bad year, not only in a riculture where it is understandable, bu

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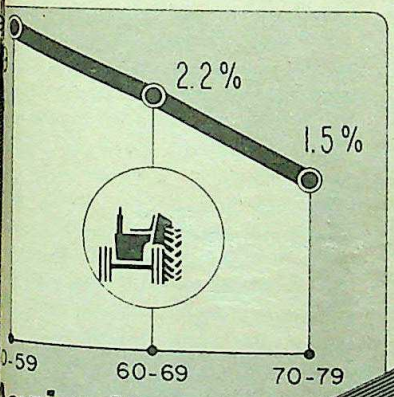
in industry which should be more sus- ble to control and planning. In 1980- he first year of the present Congress(I) inistration, industrial production shot o 4.1 per cent from virtually nothing e previous year and Congressmen th- up their caps in the air. In the follow- ear (1981-82), the rate doubled and were still more caps in the air. This the rate has been chopped back to 4 cent but Pranab Mukherjee will no t explain it away by blaming it all on rought and the global recession. But nows, and so does everybody else in inistry, that the 4 per cent rate is the one and everything else is a fluke.

Higher Savings: Actually, there is no n why the economy should slow n, when we are saving more than ever, also investing more than ever. In the we saved about 7 per cent of our me. In the following decade, this went o 10 per cent and further to 15 per in the '70s. In fact, it was as high as st 20 per cent in 1978-79, which is y three times the figure reached in -51.

Here is a riddle. How is it that we are ng away so much in the form of sav- while our income is growing, if at all,



Agricultural Output *

h more slowly? According to askar's figures, while per capita in- es grew at 1.8 per cent in the '50s, dropped to 1.2 per cent in the '60s further down to only 1 per cent in the decade. The rapid growth in the sav- ratio in the face of sluggish increase comes implies that consumption must be slowing down. Since consumption s rise to demand, the slowdown in umption must also result in a slow- n in demand. And this is precisely what has been happening. The recent recession may have been triggered off by the credit squeeze but it is really a consequence of the slow hardening of consumption arteries brought about by a general fall in incomes and a marked propensity for savings.

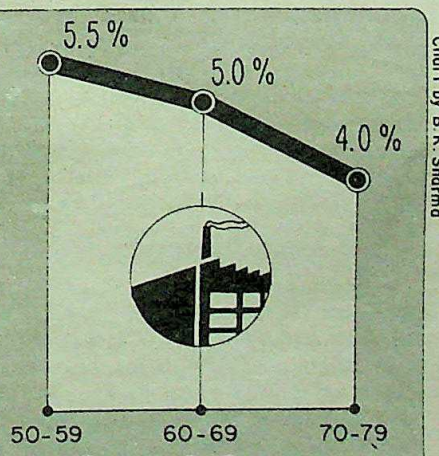
HERE is also another riddle. There is nothing wrong in savings provided they are translated into investment, which, of course, they must be. But investment by itself is of little use unless it creates incomes, which, unfortunately it is not doing in India, not, at least, at the rate it should. If investment was used more productively, it would generate sufficient incomes, fast enough to sustain high consumption rates. This is what is happening in Japan which has also a high savings rate—something like 30 per cent—and an equally high investment rate. But the Japanese do not fiddle about with their investment. They can put up a steel plant in three years flat, while we take that long just to decide where the plant should be put up and in collaboration with whom—and all this after spending a great deal of time in deciding whether the plant should be put up at all. The Vijayanagar steel project has been in the pipeline for 10 long years and the pipeline itself has now been eaten up by the worms which infest files in Udyog Bhavan and elsewhere. Our economic mechanism swallows up everything—labour, management, materials, technology—and delivers a lemon.

Tell-tale Mark: The slowdown has already left its tell-tale mark. We were supposed to be self-sufficient in food and self-reliant in industry. As it is, foodgrain imports have already begun on a major scale, and as for self-reliance in industry, we are so short of capital that the state-owned Steel Authority of India cannot bring itself to generate enough money to set up a new steel plant even once in 10 years. We are looking up to foreign capital to bail us out, something that would not be necessary, or only marginally, if our own investments had been more productive. The point to note, however, is that our present difficulties are not due to such temporary and accidental factors like a drought here and a credit squeeze there but are the end-result of a deep malaise brought about by the hardening of the economic arteries.

The Government has been able to manage so far by borrowing on an unprecedented scale both at home and abroad and through savage hikes in taxation. But this is no solution, though this is what the finance minister will attempt in the next budget also. A deficit of Rs 3,500 crore is neither here nor there; it is less than 3 per cent of our national income. A secretary in the Commerce Ministry said recently that a trade deficit of the order of Rs 5,000 crore was a flea-bite for a country like India. If a 40 per cent trade deficit is a flea-bite—some flea, that—a 3 per cent budget deficit must be no more than a pinprick. And who was ever hurt by a pinprick?

Pranab Mukherjee may also care to see the scenario that is being projected for the '80s on the basis of past trends. If the slowdown continues—and the economy has been steadily going down in terms of growth rates for the past 30 years, not just 3—and the budgets do nothing to arrest the trend, the Indian economy will grow at less than 3 per cent a year in terms of GNP and not more than 0.8 to 0.9 per cent a year in terms of per capita incomes. Sector-wise, the growth of farm output may fall to about 1 per cent a year, that is, half the population rate, making nonsense of all our claims to self-sufficiency. Industry will grow, if that is the right word, at around 3 per cent a year on the average, or may be 33 per cent in the entire decade, out of which a third of the growth has already taken place in the last 2 years. So in the remaining years, the industrial growth rate will be about half of that attained 30 years ago. In fact, everything in the '80s will be on that scale except that population and government expenditure will have continued to rise. And since the finance ministers will not be able to balance their books, they will begin cooking them.

Pranab Mukherjee may not be there to stir the witches' brew—finance ministers do not last that long, even in India—but where else can the rest of us go?



Industrial Output *

* ANNUAL GROWTH RATES

Chart by B.K. Sharma

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REVENUE

Taxing Disputes

FINANCE ministers may think they draw up the Government's budget. But, increasingly, what finance ministers propose the law courts dispose. Vast sums of potential tax revenue are now held up by action in the courts, the latest official tally totting up to a staggering Rs 2,000 crore.

What was a minor irritant till three years ago has since then snowballed into the most important problem faced by the Government in its vast tax collection exercise: no fewer than 8,000 cases are now pending in the Supreme Court and the various high courts over excise and customs levies. And the result is a gaping hole in the tax coffers: revenue from excise duty, the single most important tax weapon, could go up by 20 per cent if the cases were quickly disposed of.

Officials frankly admit that, if the tax collection this year has been below par, one problem is the sudden burgeoning of law suits—from an annual average of about 200 till three years ago to many times that number now.

Increasing Litigation: At a meeting with industrialists last month, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee served clear notice that the Government's patience was wearing thin. Mukherjee upbraided industry and trade for taking frivolous issues to the courts, and warned that the Government would be forced to take action if the flood of litigation did not stop. There has been considerable speculation since then that the Government has some tricks up its sleeve, and that the coming budget may unveil preventive measures.

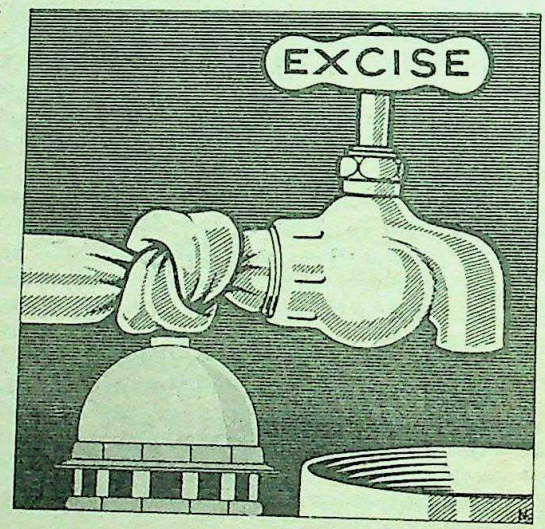
Alarmed, apex chambers of commerce as well as individual industrialists have hastily started a private dialogue with the Government in an effort to forestall punitive action. But officials indicated last fortnight that they were not satisfied with the response so far; and there was good reason to believe that the finance minister was engaged in extended discussions with his officers to find a solution to an urgent problem.

"Most of the cases are frivolous, and the assessees know they have no sustainable case," said G.S. Sawhney, chairman of the central board of excise and customs. "Their objective seems to be to delay paying tax, and a stay order from a court enables them to use tax money as interest-free capital."

Enormous Gains: Sawhney did not mince words when he said that four or five companies in the cigarette industry alone have benefited to the tune of Rs 150 crore because of pending excise cases. "At the current rates of interest, they are enjoying an annual gain of Rs 30 crore on interest alone."

The sums involved in cases filed by other industries are equally breathtaking. And with the bulk of cases taking three or more years to work their way through the judicial hierarchy, Sawhney estimates that most litigants have earned the equivalent of the disputed tax as interest over the period of the court cases.

Industry, however, sees the problem quite differently. Said D.H. Pai Panandikar, secretary-general of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry: "Industry is entitled to interpret a tax law to its advantage." He sees the problem in terms of poor drafting of tax laws and arbitrary decisions by the excise and customs officials, and says that in most cases the courts have handed down verdicts against the Government's point of view—a claim disputed by Sawhney.



Conflicting Judgements: The legal issues are often complex, and matters have not been helped by the fact that different high courts have taken opposing standpoints on similar cases. In one, two division benches of the same high court have handed down conflicting judgements; and Sawhney says there have been cases of industrialists losing a case in one high court and promptly taking the same issue to another.

While many cases involve genuine d putes over the correct interpretation of laws, there are numerous cases of trad and industrialists deliberately trying to ploit the tax laws in perverse fashion. one case that Sawhney cites, there was sharp difference in the customs d charged on stainless steel sheets and sta less steel 'angles': 220 per cent and 60 cent, respectively. Traders proceeded exploit this by importing sheets bent right angles in the middle and claim that these were 'angles'. "Everybody in industry and trade knows what is an an and what isn't," says Sawhney. "But t issue went to court, and the Governm of course won. But time and money w inevitably lost. This is only one of ma cases in which non-issues have been ma into issues."

In a second case, concerning t import of edible oils, the Governme granted a concessional 5 per cent impo duty to the public sector State Tradi Corporation, as against the norm import duty of 12.5 per cent. The iss was promptly in the courts, with priv te traders charging discriminatio Once again, revenue was locked until the courts rejected the importe pleas: the law clearly permitted t Government's action.

Excise Dispute: But customs cas are the lesser headache. For one th they involve tax dues of no more th Rs 250 crore. The much bigger proble is excise, where Rs 1,750 crore a under dispute. Though 4,000 exc cases are now before the courts (7 before the Supreme Court alone), mo of them hinge on a few basic issues:

► Does an excise ceiling imposed the Government preclude the impo tion of special and additional excise d ties? Industry says yes, the Governme says no. The tyre industry is among tho which have taken this to court.

► In calculating the dutiable value goods, the Government says the man facturer should deduct only the actu duty paid from the producer's price. B industry claims a much higher deductio permitted. The verdict on this could va the final tax by a factor of two. A maj dispute here has been in the case cigarettes.

► Countervailing duty is normally cha ged on imported goods to match exci duties on domestically produced equiva lents, and a major issue before the cour has been whether countervailing duty ca be charged when there is no excise levie Industry took this to court—and lost.

► The Government has repeatedly levie excise on intermediate goods in a tota

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ufacturing process. In a case involving Synthetics, the Government taxed po- chips separately from the final pro- nylon yarn. J.K. Synthetics took this ourt—and won. But similar cases in courts have been decided in favour e Government on the principle that s produced for captive consumption be taxed.

The most prodigious litigation in the of excise has been over what have to be known as post-manufacturing nses. The history here dates back to a judgement by the Supreme Court in se involving Voltas, where the court ved that excise duty was leviable only manufacturing costs and manufactu- profits", and not on selling costs. Sei- on this with barely disguised glee, a of companies promptly claimed excise ption on a variety of "post-manufac- g" expenditures, including packing marketing expenses, advertising ets, insurance and freight charges, even the salaries of marketing staff.

Modi, managing director of Modi ber, says about 8 to 10 per cent of osts constitute post-manufacturing nses. Most other companies have more modest in their claims: ITC post-manufacturing expenses ac- t for only 1.6 to 2 per cent of the pany's total costs.

Whatever the percentages, the panies asked for a refund of taxes dy paid. Dunlop, for instance, a case in the Calcutta High Court, ng that taxes it had paid since should be refunded as these had wrongly paid on post-manufactur- xpenses. Similar cases were filed in courts across the country. The ernment came out with an amend- t to the Excise and Salt Tax Act to and stem the flood of cases, but noth- would work the trick. A cigarette com- y claimed, for instance, that the cello- e in which its packets were wrapped d not be charged excise. And in a ation of this, a vanaspati manufacturer ued that the 16-kg tins in which it sold roduct were "returnable packing" and efore not excisable. Across the coun- there was hardly any major company ch did not go to court claiming that or other portion of its expenses could be charged excise.

Differing Views: The judgements han- down by the high courts have not ed clarify matters, there being a bewil- g variety of views offered from the ch. Some courts held that packing d not be charged excise, others held yes, it could. Golden Tobacco first a case in the Gujarat High Court, and then won in the same court—after an amendment which was supposed to tighten the law!

Most recently, a full bench of the Gujarat High Court tried to set the matter straight in a case involving Calico Mills, by pointing out that the Supreme Court's 1972 observation had to be seen in perspective, and that post-manufacturing expenses could be incurred only after the goods had left the factory. There could not be in-plant post-manufacturing costs.

If the Supreme Court concurs with this view, then Indian industry could end up having to pay up over Rs 1,000 crore on this account alone. Does it have that kind of money? Freddie Mehta, director of Tata Sons, is doubtful: "I'm not sure at all. Many companies could face very serious problems if they are suddenly faced with a huge tax demand."

Payment Problem: There are several other areas in which huge amounts of tax are in dispute: the textile industry, for instance, is currently fighting a major battle over whether the Government can charge excise on an intermediate product in a total production cycle (eg: yarn in a factory turning out cloth). The outcome could determine whether many mills will stay healthy or slide into financial distress.

Vast sums of what the Government claims as tax revenue are now held up by action in the courts, the latest official tally totalling up to a staggering Rs 2,000 crore. No fewer than 8,000 cases are now pending in the Supreme Court and the various high courts over excise and customs levies.

Government officials react spiritedly to any question about the companies' ability to pay: "They have already taken the money from the customer, but have not given it to the Government. How can they not have the money to pay?"

The corporate world meanwhile has been rife with speculation that the recent spate of takeovers of companies was financed by money held back from the tax man. Many of the companies or industrial groups most active in the acquisitions business have also been the ones to take the maximum advantage of tax loopholes: the Modis, for instance. V.K. Modi stoutly refutes this charge. "No one in his right mind would use short-term cash to acquire long-term assets," he says. But Sawhney points out that there are hardly any companies which have in fact kept the disputed money apart: one well-known case is that of ITC, which has invested the money in units of the Unit Trust of India.

Government Determination: While the court cases drag on, the Government has increasingly made clear its determination to realise the tax that it sees as due. In the last budget, the finance minister made two major changes in the law, with retrospective effect from 1944, to counteract the effect of court judgements and to ensure that the companies would pay up. In October, the Government issued an ordinance to prevent industry from stretching a concession given on excise duty to special and additional excise duties as well. And at the end of November, following the exploiting of a tax concession beyond what it had intended, the Government simply withdrew an excise order on cigarettes that resulted in a trebling of the minimum duty on cigarettes.

All these steps came before the finance minister's warning in mid-December about industry taking all manner of issues to the courts. Noting this trend, Freddie Mehta says: "The Government has clearly decided to go ahead, irrespective of court decisions. There is nothing in the record of the last three years to say that the interpretation of the courts will be allowed to hold."

With every straw in the wind pointing to the fact that matters are now coming to a head, a number of concerned industrialists are searching for solutions acceptable to both sides. Meanwhile, officials point out that the problem can solve itself if the courts are less liberal with stay orders, and if they restrain themselves from trying to perform the tax man's role. Two possible solutions that the Government is apparently considering are a tightening of the law with regard to writ petitions in tax cases, and a provision that in cases of stay orders being issued, the litigant should first deposit the disputed tax money with the Government or in a suspense account. The law already provides for steps in this direction, but may be tightened to make it more effective.

The Rs 2,000, crore question now is whether government-industry parleys will yield a bloodless solution to what has become an oversized problem, or whether the Government will come out with sweeping measures in the next budget.

—T.N. NINAN with bureau report

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HOC has been working steadily on extending that line for years now

The initials of India's public enemy number one are T.B. It's killed more people than the two world wars put together. Even today there are over a million people suffering from it. Will they too prematurely join the silent majority?

Not if HOC can help it. HOC is one of the two companies in the world making Meta Amino Phenol, a chemical used in the manufacture of PAS. PAS along with Streptomycin and Isonex is the trinity that is most effective in vanquishing T.B.

HOC does not stop with Meta Amino Phenol. It manufactures a host of other chemicals which are vital for the pharmaceutical industry. To name only two, Acetanilide is the starting point for all sulpha drugs and Paranitrochlorobenzene goes in the production of Paracetamol.

If HOC is a preserver of human life it is also a ruthless mass destroyer. HOC's Benzene Hexachloride is a potent killer of the malaria mosquito. Other chemicals from HOC are involved in the manufacture of insecticides, weedicides and pesticides without which the country's food production would fall short by millions of tonnes.

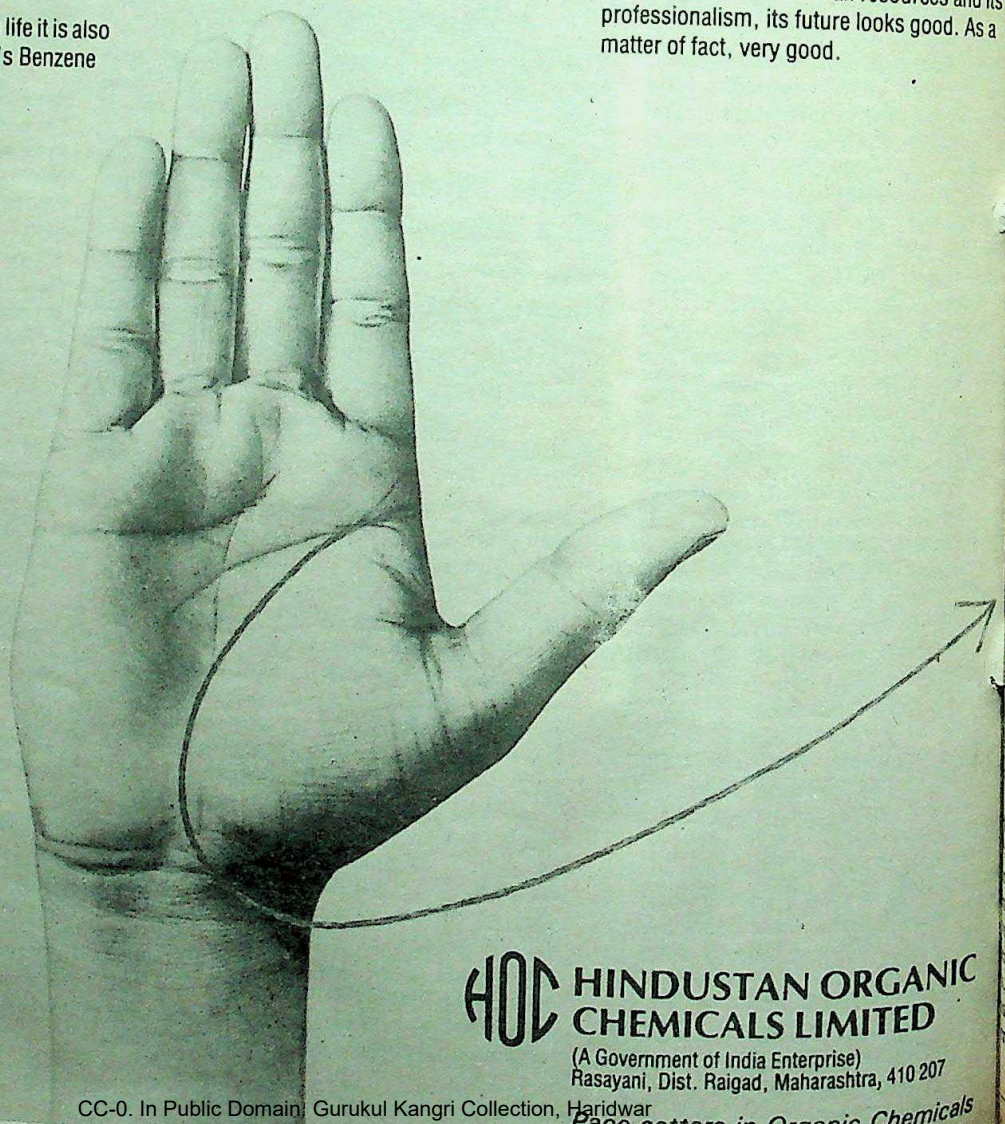
But that's just a part of HOC's total business. As a petrochemical based company, HOC produces over 28 chemical intermediates that go into the manufacture of dyes, dye intermediates, laminates, rubber chemicals and others.

And what do all these product lines add up to? Right now we have 14 highly sophisticated plants on stream with an investment of Rs. 50 crores. We are also in the process of expanding considerably the capacities of these plants.

Simultaneously work on the Rs. 50 crore Phenol (40,000 TPA)/Acetone (24,640 TPA) project along with a Propylene Recovery Unit at Cochin is going full steam ahead.

With its outstanding performance all along in the field of production and sales, HOC has been consistently maintaining sound financial health. On the export front the company has bagged Chemexcil's award for its excellent performance for five years in a row. HOC's success over the years can only be explained by the spirit of harmony and shared goals among its entire work force.

Thanks to HOC's human resources and its professionalism, its future looks good. As a matter of fact, very good.



HOC HINDUSTAN ORGANIC CHEMICALS LIMITED

(A Government of India Enterprise)
Rasayani, Dist. Raigad, Maharashtra, 410 207

Pace-setters in Organic Chemicals

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ME TAX

tar Billings

HOW MUCH does Amitabh Bachchan get for looking grim over two hours of a Bombay pot-boiler? How much does Malini get for acting coy while mendra tries to win her love? How in fact, does any established star, or producer in the booming ay film industry (estimated turnover: 0 crore) earn for indulging in, war- along with, or providing the kind of nics that go down so well with the millions?

oing by their income tax returns for st 10 years, the earnings of the upper of the Bombay film world are no- near the fabulous sums credited to by gossip. Bachchan, for instance, aid only Rs 1 lakh for his perfor- in the legendary *Sholay*, and Rs 9 his highest fee so far—for Ramesh s *Shakti*. Hema Malini's largest fee has been for *Dillagi* way back in Rs 5 lakh. Rekha Ganeshan's e for 1980–81 was Rs 4.25 lakh—he claimed a number of deductions. hile Bachchan and Dharmendra are ghest paid stars, durable old Ashok r seems to have the most wealth: lakh, according to his wealth tax s.

ax Operation: These revelations are gh points of a study being made by ious mandarins of the Finance ry, which is trying to, in the words enior income tax officer of Bombay, tify the points at which black money ially generated and plug the loop- The massive exercise involves the y of the income tax returns of over persons connected with the Bombay world, and the tip of the iceberg is osed of 15 actors, playback singers 0 film distributors. The income tax rities are going to probe closely for discrepancies in the mass of financial ments that would unveil the myriad iddles believed to be current in the ry.

The hunt for the black money was ed off in early 1980 when members rliament demanded strict scrutiny of e tax returns filed by the stars. The e minister assured them that the nment would compare the financial ments given by film distributors, film producers and others of that ilk and on any blurred images they dis- ed. In July 1981, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), on instructions from the ministry, fired a lengthy questionnaire at income tax offices in Bombay, asking for a veritable encyclopaedia of information.

Bachchan: shrewd claims

Zeenat Aman: obvious assets

The investigators wanted to know the films signed by each actor along with the terms and conditions of the agreement; payments received by the actor, both for films in the making and those completed; the income of leading stars and producers from other sources such as property, distribution agencies, and other commercial ventures; details of the incomes of firms owned by the stars' relatives; the cost of every film in which the actor played the lead; details of bank accounts held by film stars and producers. They also asked for the number of searches and seizures made by the authorities and the amount recovered; the cases filed, and the stage the cases were in; and a list of films which had cost over Rs 25 lakh and over Rs 1 crore in the last seven years.

Modest Sums: It took the officers nearly 14 months, working in Bombay and Madras, to collect this information. In August 1982, the Bombay income tax authorities called in more staff to tabulate the 10-year income tax and wealth tax returns of the 25 actors, singers and distributors. The actors are the upper crust of the film industry and range from Bachchan, Zeenat Aman and Shatrughan Sinha to the indestructible Ashok Kumar and Pran; the producers include Sippy Films, Raj Kapoor's R.K. Films, and Manmohan Desai and Rakesh Mehra.

The tax returns reveal that the male or the female lead receives between 2 and 5 per cent of the total cost of production of a film. *Kala Patthar* was shown to have cost Rs 1.27 crore to make; yet, Amitabh Bachchan received only Rs 5 lakh from it. Similarly, Zeenat Aman, who played the female lead in Subhash K. Desai's Rs 2.25 crore block-buster *Dharam Veer*, had received only Rs 2.05 lakh in three instalments till 1978–79 from the producers. The film's hero, Dharmendra signed a contract worth Rs 1.50 lakh. In F.K. Films' *Qurbani*, which cost Rs 1.55 crore, Zeenat Aman was signed for Rs 3 lakh. According to Hema Malini's income tax returns, she got only Rs 4.50 lakh of the Rs 1.17 crore spent on Pramod Chakravarty's *Azad*.

Revelations: These cold figures directly contradict industry rumours which have the top stars charging astronomical sums. In fact, the returns show that no actor, including Bachchan, ever crossed the Rs 10 lakh mark. His Rs 9 lakh fee for *Shakti*—according to an agreement signed with M.R. Production Pvt Ltd on September 1,

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1978—made him the industry's most expensive film star. Among the women, Hema Malini's Rs 5 lakh for *Dillagi* is still the high-water mark.

The compendium of income tax returns has some more to reveal:

► Raakhee Gulzar, Shabana Azmi, Waheeda Rehman, Manoj Kumar and Vinod Khanna all reported net incomes of around Rs 3 lakh.

► Ten film personalities disclosed that their taxable income after deductions was between Rs 4 lakh and Rs 8 lakh. Sanjeev Kumar, star of over a 100 films, had a taxable income of Rs 7.10 lakh (1980), which has grown from Rs 1.23 lakh during 1971-72. His net wealth during 1980-81 was slightly less than Rs 12 lakh and his income less than Rs 8 lakh. (He also made a disclosure of Rs 10 lakh under the Voluntary Disclosure Scheme during the Emergency). The star has other interests besides acting. He is a director of Roopraj Films Pvt Ltd and owns a share of Sanjeev Properties Pvt Ltd.

► Zeenat Aman, one of the most enduring stars, has a taxable income of Rs 6.39 lakh, making her the wealthiest among the female stars. Her wealth returns in 1981-82 stood at Rs 12.50 lakh, up from Rs 2.64 lakh in 1974-75. Not surprisingly, three of the Kapoor clan figure in the Rs 4 to Rs 8 lakh bracket with Rishi Kapoor (Rs 6.33 lakh in 1978-79), elder brother Randhir (Rs 4.80 lakh in 1978-79) and Shammi Kapoor (Rs 6.01 lakh in 1978-79). But pride of place goes to Lata Mangeshkar, the playback singer who rules the music waves. Her taxable income after deductions stood at Rs 8 lakh in 1980-81 though her income tax returns show her income to be Rs 28,000 per month and her net wealth stands at Rs 30 lakh.

► In comparison, the reigning king of Bombay films, Amitabh Bachchan's taxable income after deductions was almost half that of Mangeshkar's (Rs 4.16 lakh in 1980-81). However, Bachchan's income statements for the last five years show an enduring relationship between his income and his losses in business ventures. During 1978, when his income was Rs 5.37 lakh, the actor suffered a loss of Rs 43,000 in business dealings. The following year, he became the most sought-after star in the business and his income increased sharply, but so did his losses. He regularly bought and sold shares in a company called Raymond Paints Pvt Ltd and his losses on these transactions were usually around Rs 3 lakh each time, allowing him to claim relief from what would otherwise have been a crushing tax burden. He also made liberal donations: Rs 18 lakh to one hospital in 1979-80 out of a pre-tax income of Rs 21.5 lakh and Rs 21.80 lakh to another institution in 1980-81 out of a pre-tax income of Rs 33.5 lakh.

Lata Mangeshkar: tuneful success

Hence, although the star's films were cleaning up at the box-office, the amounts shown on his income and wealth tax returns did not change appreciably from 1977-78, when he paid Rs 3.11 lakh as income tax on an assessed income of Rs 5.06 lakh as compared to Rs 4.16 lakh in 1980-81. Bachchan also came up with Rs 10 lakh during the Voluntary Disclos Scheme. According to his returns, his range between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 9 l per film.

Hema Malini: taxing times

► Only three stars claimed that t taxable income was above Rs 8 la Dharmendra—Rs 13.35 lakh (1980- Pran Kishan Sikand—Rs 11.25 l (1980-81) and Shashi Kapoor—Rs 8 lakh (1977-78).

► Half of the stars filed wealth tax turns which showed their wealth as Rs lakh with Waheeda Rehman (Rs 55,0 Vinod Khanna (Rs 10,000) and He Malini (negative wealth of Rs 42,000) the bottom.

None of the income tax officers Delhi, Madras and Bombay was willing talk about the operation because of "uproar the disclosure would cause", one of them put it. However, they ad that they encountered many hurdles compiling the information. According reports received by the Revenue Depa ment, over a dozen film actors and dis butors have not filed their income a wealth tax returns for the last three ye and it was during this period that many the most expensive films wefe made.

Incomplete Task: Further, althou the CBDT officials had completed th scrutiny of the available returns, th main task, to evaluate the amount black money floating around, was n here near completion because the bre down of the cost of the films—acto shares, director's share and so on—w not available. It was reported to the CB that of the 2,216 feature films certified exhibition from 1978 to 1981, 365 Hi films cost at least Rs 25 lakh—but producers' income could not be assessed half of them had not filed their returns time. Also, the income tax officers cou not furnish the returns of those produc whose films had cost over Rs 1 crore, ov the last three years.

The commissioners of income tax Bombay for circles Bombay City III a Bombay Central wrote to the CBDT say that in their circles, only eight films c over Rs 1 crore, including *Satyam Shi Sundaram* (Rs 1.13 crore), *Shaan* (Rs 1.0 crore), *Sargam* (Rs 1.79 crore), *Patthar* and *Qurbani*. Unfortunately, commissioners have not yet given a information about the share of actors the total cost of production. This wou have undoubtedly helped the taxme locate any sources of evasion avoidance, and answer once and for all th crucial question of how much Bachcha gets for two hours of gruff-voiced dram on the screen.

—PRABHU CHAWL

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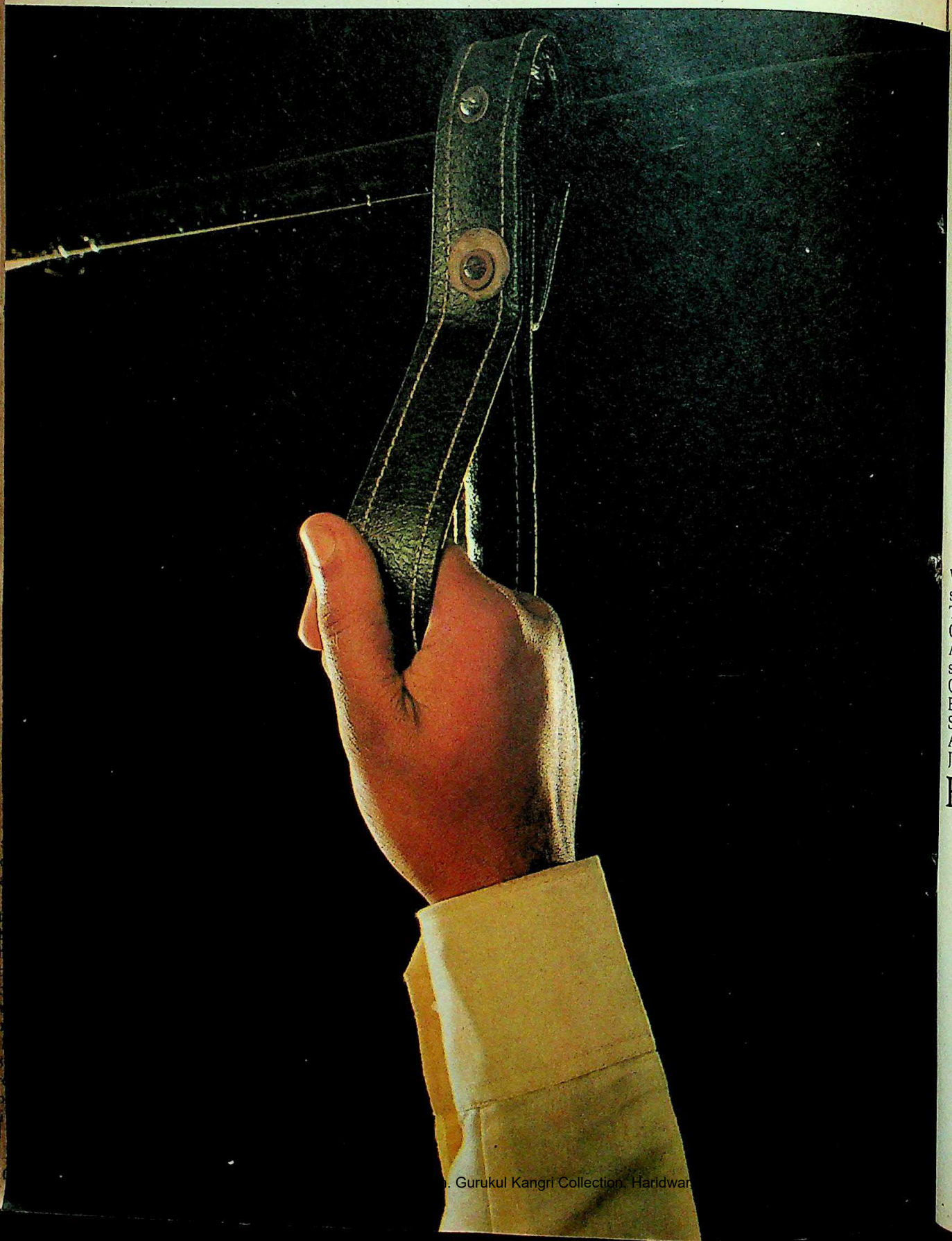

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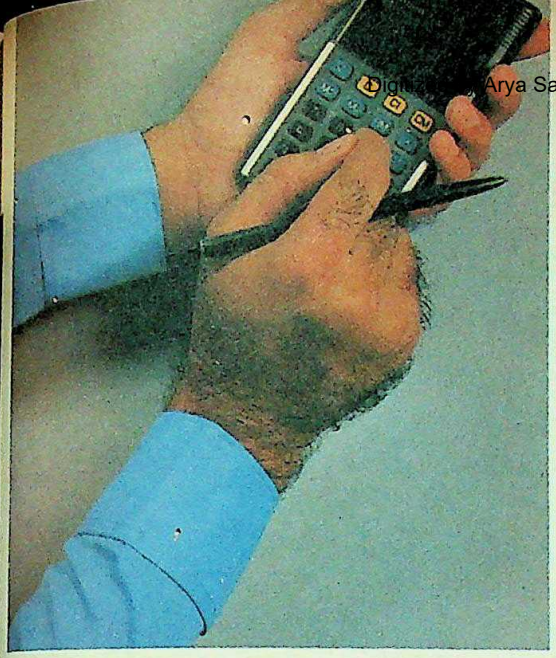

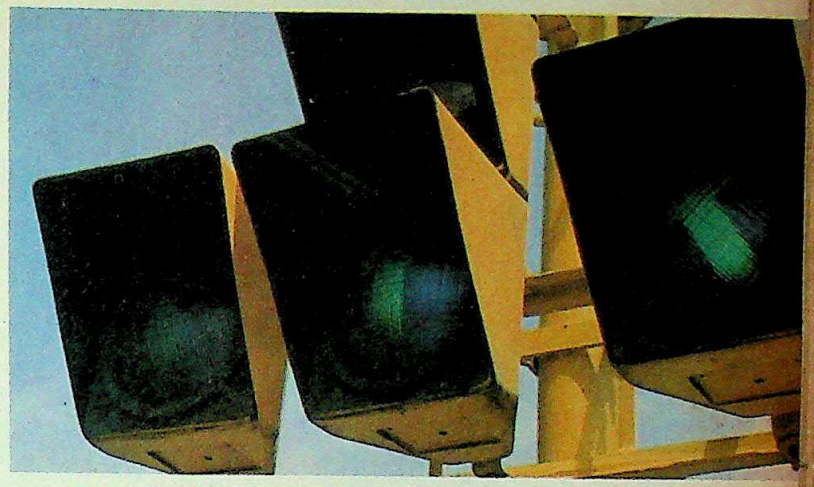

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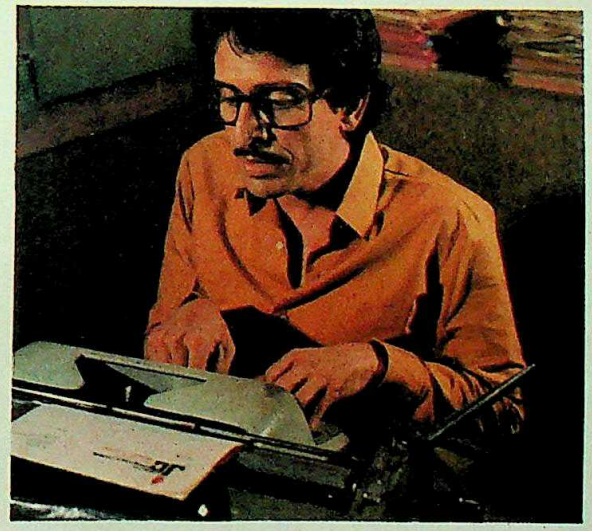

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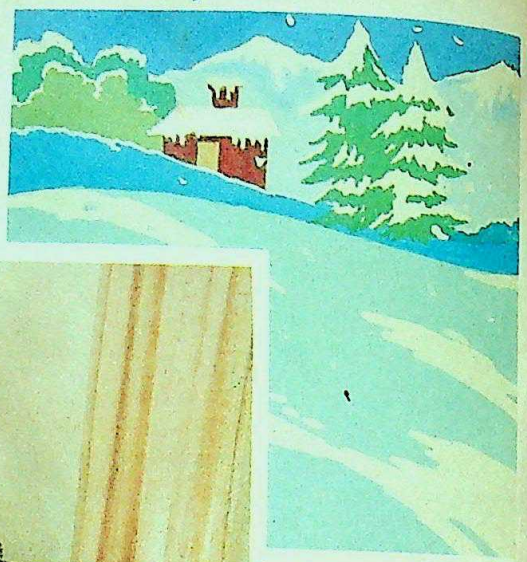

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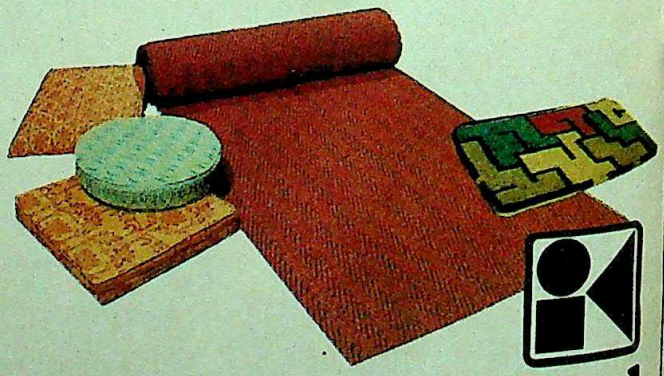

Coir Board

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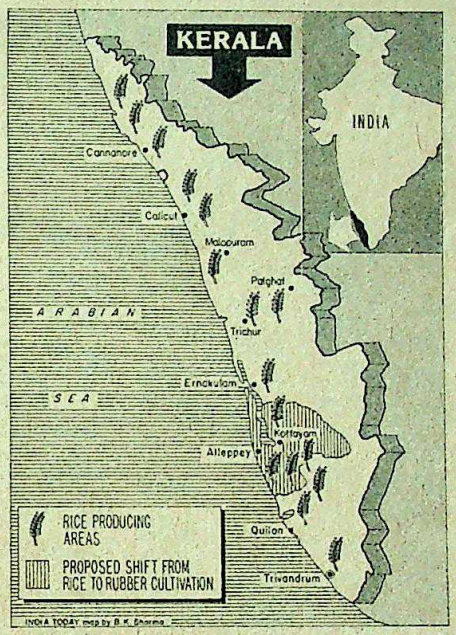
ULTURE

orm In A Ricebowl

PPLES of shock are running hrough Kerala's placid paddy fields. The reason is that last the Rubber Board came up with a al to convert the state's Kuttanad l into vast stretches of rubber ions. The resultant storm of contro- s understandable. Kerala produces 0 per cent of its requirements of which is the staple diet. And ad, falling in the two districts of ey and Kottayam, accounts for over cent of the state's paddy land. If hift to rubber, Kerala will be almost tely dependent on external supply staple food. That could be a pre- position, as witnessed by ouring Tamil Nadu's recent decision the movement of rice out of the



owerful economic interests have themselves behind the Rubber s proposal. K.M. Mani, finance r in the Karunakaran Government, the strong rubber lobby and believes that Kerala should concentrate on rops. The farmers themselves may averse to the idea, since most of have been losing money on paddy tion. Said P. Joseph Varghese, one leading cultivators in Kuttanad: he last 10 years, I have been ruined economical paddy cultivation. If I switch to rubber, I will be finished." se estimates that the loss per e of paddy is Rs 200.

Mounting Pressures: But Kuttanad's 0 acres of paddy provide work for mated 70,000 agricultural labourers, re up in arms against the Rubber s proposal. The Farm Labourers' affiliated to the Communist Party ia-Marxist (CPI-M), is the most mili- nd organised body of its kind, and ready launched agitations in protest. pressures mount, the Government e forced to take a stand. But so far, maintained a discreet silence. Not so perts, who have ranged themselves her side in an increasingly acrimo- debate.

he Rubber Board's experts, based in yam, argue that rubber can be culti- in the paddy fields once these are d of water and proper bunds ucted. Board Chairman A.K. Moha- andran claimed: "The response from s has been spontaneous and en- ging." The board, he added, been besieged by requests from farmers to teach them rubber cultivation. And E.T. Varghese, vice-chairman of the Rubber Board and a rubber planter himself, said that the rubber trees grew faster and bigger in Kuttanad than elsewhere because of better moisture content, which enabled tapping even in summer and therefore a better yield round the year.

However K. Mathew Kurien, director of the Indian Institute of Regional Development Studies, thinks the move will be disastrous since Kuttanad is mostly below sea-level, and five major rivers submerge the entire area during the monsoons. Kurien also points out: "The move is not based on any scientific study of the costs and benefits of rubber cultivation in the area."

Impediments: A shift to rubber will not be easy for more than one reason. To start with, the Kerala Land Utilisation Order (KLUO) forbids switching from paddy to rubber, or any other cash crop. This apart, substantial investment will be required to bring about a change of crop. Paddy bunds will become useless, and new bunds will have to be constructed before rubber can be planted. Even if this is done, it takes a minimum of five years for a rubber tree to start yielding, during which period the farmer gets no income. Most farmers in the area have small holdings, and their staying power is limited. One Trivandrum-based economist predicted that in the event of a shift to rubber, most of these small holders will be forced to sell out to the big rubber planters.

But the Rubber Board remains optimistic, and Finance Minister Mani is apparently putting pressure on the chief minister to amend the KLUO in the next Assembly session. Officials point out that the KLUO is in any case a dead letter. If a farmer insists on shifting from paddy to another crop, the land is supposed to be auctioned. In the only case so far when an auction was held, there was no bidder: no one wanted to cultivate paddy.

Many cultivators in other areas of the state have already been switching to rubber, and the acreage under this cash crop has trebled in recent years, while that under paddy has declined. Much of the attraction of rubber is based on the high prices ruling in the market, which is protected by restrictions on the import of cheaper rubber. And R. Hali, the Trivandrum-based agricultural expert, points out that the Government has been giving generous subsidies and loans to encourage rubber plantation, subsidies that have been denied to other crops. The Rubber Board itself has been doling out free saplings in polythene bags to farmers in the Kuttanad area.

Irrespective of what emerges eventually from the controversy, it is significant that what was once unthinkable in Kuttanad is now being debated as a serious agricultural option.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

THE MARKETS

Slight Fall

ACCORDING to Murphy's Law, if things can go wrong, they will go wrong. Old Murphy was an incorrigible optimist; but it is not known whether he ever played the stock market on a slight variation of his law—if shares can go down, they will go down. They have in fact been doing so throughout the past fortnight, and Murphy must be cursing himself for laying down the law.

He may be cursing in vain, for the upset in the market is almost certainly temporary and it is just a matter of time before it bounces back into its old shape. There are many who think that the bulls had carried matters a little too far and some kind of adjustment was overdue. Considering the political earthquake in the south, the fall is not much to write home about. About this time six years ago, when a similar earthquake hit the ruling party in the north, it took the markets nearly a year to find their way back. This time it should not take so long—if, that is, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee

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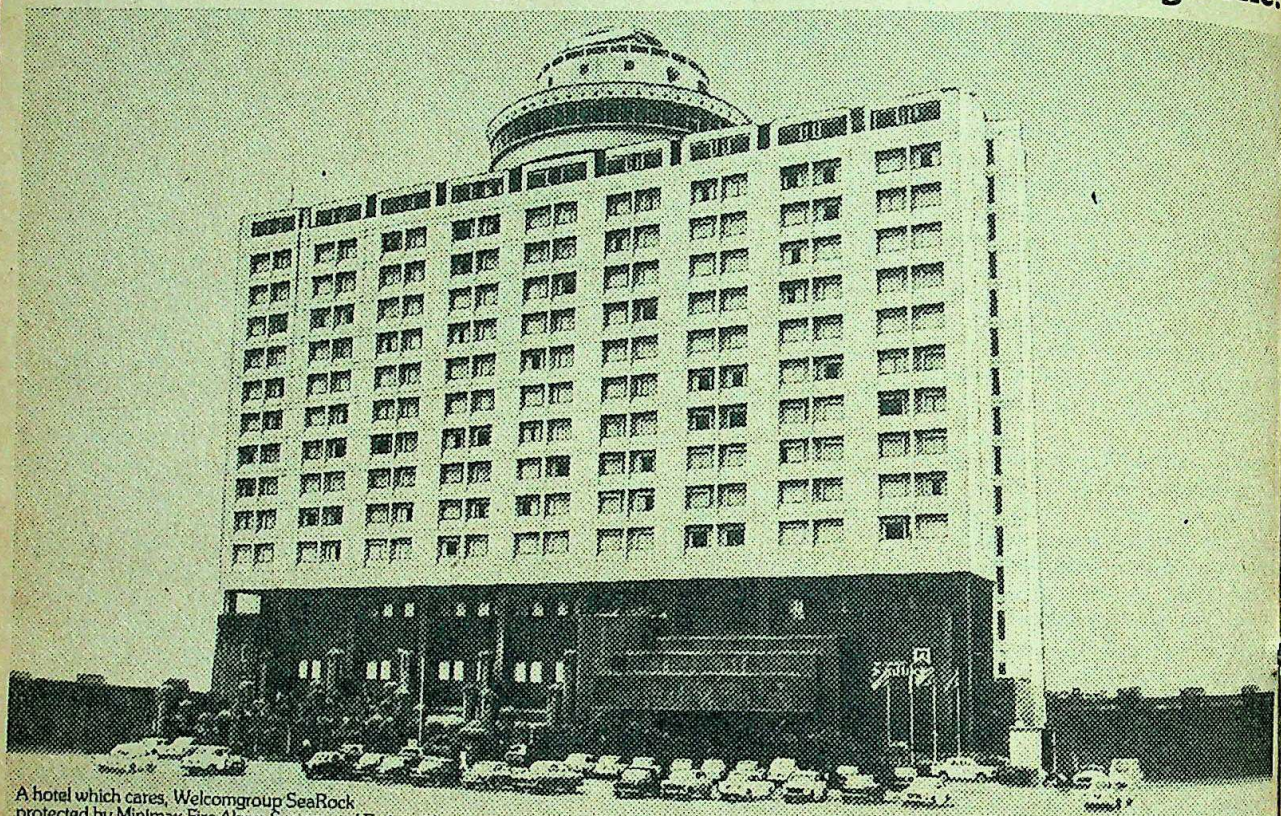

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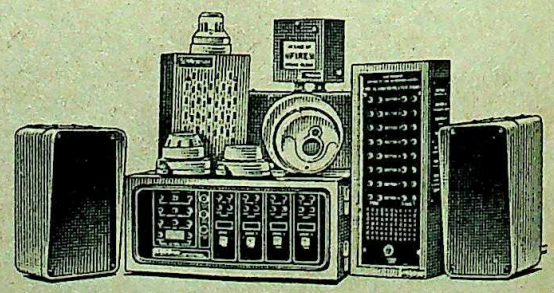

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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High	Low	Close	Change on Fortnight
		1983	19.1.83	
...lal Sarabhai	17.75	14.50	14.50	(1.50)
...k Leyland	36.50	33.50	35.50	(1.00)
...a Paints	35.00	34.50	35.00	(0.25)
...ciated Cement	406.00	379.50	379.50	(22.50)
...Copco	29.75	28.50	28.50	(0.75)
...Auto	1,200.00	1,040.00	1,040.00	(75.00)
...rpur	42.80	41.00	41.25	(1.05)
...da Rayon	257.00	243.50	243.50	(10.50)
...Jute	54.60	50.60	50.60	(3.90)
...Plast	74.00	69.00	69.50	(4.50)
...bay Dyeing	73.00	68.50	68.50	(4.50)
...ke Bond	27.50	27.20	27.50	(0.20)
...o Mills	246.50	230.00	238.00	(4.50)
...Tyres	202.50	197.50	197.50	(4.50)
...ry Spinning	762.50	720.00	720.00	(35.00)
...ide India	57.50	53.20	56.50	(0.15)
...ate	94.00	85.00	90.50	5.50
...Cloth Mills	35.50	32.31	34.66	0.66
...p India	21.50	20.80	21.00	(0.20)
...India Hotels	21.37	20.75	21.00	(0.37)
...ts	45.00	41.56	41.56	(3.06)
...Specialities	65.00	64.00	64.00	(0.50)
...o	31.50	26.00	26.00	(4.00)
...Keen Williams	21.75	20.35	20.80	(0.90)
...rat Fertilisers	490.00	464.00	464.00	(10.00)
...ar Rayon	52.00	47.00	47.00	(4.25)
...stan Aluminium	34.40	32.10	32.10	(1.70)
...stan Lever	56.00	54.00	55.50	0.75
...stan Motors	35.10	29.06	29.16	(5.70)
...st Dyes	35.50	30.50	30.50	(4.00)
...n Aluminium	20.00	19.25	19.40	(0.40)
...n Cable	23.00	22.40	22.90	0.15
...a Explosives	24.00	22.10	22.80	(1.10)
...n Hotels	56.00	53.00	53.00	(3.00)
...n Organic	28.50	27.50	27.50	(1.00)
...n Oxygen	33.60	31.30	31.30	(2.30)
...well-Rand	87.00	84.00	84.00	(2.00)
...	44.85	40.90	40.90	(3.40)
...ree Tea	21.75	20.35	20.80	(0.70)
... Synthetics	57.50	54.90	54.90	(2.50)
...ram	65.40	61.30	61.30	(4.10)
...ic Engineering	162.00	151.00	151.00	(11.00)
...ri (Madras)	24.00	23.00	24.00	0.50
...n & Toubro	56.00	54.25	54.25	(1.50)
...n	16.00	14.20	14.75	(1.05)
...a Machines	60.25	42.75	45.50	2.75
...ura Coats	21.00	19.50	20.75	0.25
...ndra & Mahindra	56.00	49.00	49.00	(4.50)
...gon	29.00	29.00	29.00	nil
...r Industries	257.50	250.00	252.50	(5.00)
...and Iron	24.00	23.00	23.00	(1.00)
...	26.00	22.50	22.50	(1.95)
...nal Organic	207.50	190.00	192.50	(2.50)
...n	38.75	37.75	38.50	nil
...t Paper	47.10	42.50	42.50	(4.20)
...a Electronics	29.25	28.80	29.00	(0.20)
...ier Auto	376.00	342.00	342.00	(32.00)
...ure Cooker	29.00	27.50	28.00	(0.50)
...way	40.75	37.00	39.50	1.50
...nce	183.00	175.00	176.00	(5.00)
...n Wallace	39.05	35.25	38.10	(0.90)
...ram Fibres	30.62	29.00	29.00	(1.50)
...ews	43.25	42.50	43.00	nil
...C	17.50	15.25	16.40	1.15
...n Products	46.80	44.75	44.75	(1.35)
...Chemicals	67.00	62.00	62.00	(4.00)
...n Steel	301.50	273.00	273.00	(23.00)
...ro	455.00	428.00	428.00	(24.50)
...nsto	45.00	39.25	39.25	(3.35)
...n Carbide	25.10	24.80	24.90	(0.10)
...n Martin Black	24.80	23.00	23.00	(1.80)
...ies	283.00	262.00	262.00	(20.00)
...ti Agro	25.00	22.60	22.60	(2.00)

doesn't add to the marketmen's woes and keeps his budgetary fireworks to the minimum.

Doing Well: From the stock market end, things always look worse than they happen to be. The corporate sector, for instance, hasn't done too badly, despite recession and the textile strike in Bombay, and has more or less got through the year unscathed. The big business groups have kept their heads down but profits have not dipped. Even engineering companies which should have been affected the most have kept their heads above water. And some companies like Ranbaxy and Lohia Machines have done remarkably well. The former is said to have ended the year with a turnover touching Rs 30 crore and the latter is about to roll out its first scooter.

Some fish always swim against the current, and so do some scrips. Colgate has been rising steadily and may soon touch 100. Other shares in the same boat are Brooke Bond, Indian Cable (which is said to be planning dilution of its foreign equity) and Lipton. Lipton, an associate of Hindustan Lever, has been rather neglected all these years—and for very good reason—but is now looking up. So is SPIC from down south, and is reported to be diversifying away from its main fertiliser business. All these scrips are moderately priced and have a lot of bounce in them.

The debenture market—for convertible as well as non-convertible debentures—is getting ready for Rs 300 crore worth of debentures, which is probably another reason why the equity market is under the weather. There seems to be no end to the debenture issues, and with the exception of one or two, almost all of them are quoted at a premium. It is obvious that the corporate sector can soak up a lot of money, either in the form of equity, debentures or fixed deposits, and as long as this pressure holds, the stock market should thrive.

Deficit: Now for the bad news: There are reports that the finance minister is not happy with his resources position and the deficit in the current year (1982–83) may overshoot the estimate by as much as Rs 1,000 crore. Since the economy has apparently absorbed such a large deficit without excessive pressure on prices—inflation has in fact been held in check—he might be tempted to try a similar deficit exercise in his next budget.

In that case, the market will almost certainly be subjected to another shock and some scrips are bound to give way. One should therefore hold one's horses until the budget with a flutter or two now and then, just to keep the bears at bay.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency		TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1	As $	9.7746	9.6704
Austria	100	As Sch.	58.6806	58.8044
Bahrain	1	Dinar	25.7656	25.5739
Bangladesh	100	Taka	40.2215	39.9222
Canada	1	Can $	8.1479	8.0637
Egypt	1	Egp £	11.6522	11.5655
France	1	Fr Frc	1.4522	1.4367
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.5272	1.5180
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.3965	1.3861
Iran	100	Rial	11.6175	11.5311
Italy	100	Lt Lira	0.7372	0.7219
Japan	100	Jap Yen	4.2386	4.1952
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.7779	0.7721
Kuwait	1	Dinar	33.9066	33.6542
Malaysia	1	ML $	4.3846	4.3367
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.9041	0.8973
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7330	0.7275
Netherlands	1	D Glds	3.7588	3.7187
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.7710	0.7653
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.3846	4.3367
Spain	100	Sp Pt	7.8679	7.8886
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4633	0.4598
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.3604	1.3464
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	5.0399	4.9848
Tanzania	1	T Sh	1.0306	1.0279
Thailand	100	Baht	47.9889	47.3842
UK	1	Pound	15.6384	15.4970
USA	1	US $	9.9100	9.7725
UAE	1	Dihram	2.6569	2.6371
USSR	1	Rouble	13.4952	13.3948
W. Germany	1	DM	4.1153	4.0719

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the banks on January 21, 1983.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index*		
January 19, 1983	251.8	2.7
Cereals	260.1	8.2
Chemicals	338.8	15.3
Industrial Fibres	169.7	(0.2)
Metals	344.1	(2.0)
Textile Yarns	220.8	(0.9)
Vegetable Oils	305.7	6.2
Gold, standard,		
January 19, 1983 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,780.00	40.00
Silver, .999		
January 19, 1983 (Rs per kg)	3,275.00	315.00
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index*		
January 17, 1983	241.0	(3.9)
Cement	233.7	(16.00)
Chemicals	214.7	(6.9)
Engineering	398.1	7.8
Fertilisers	207.6	(1.0)
Man-made fibres	398.6	(1.9)
Paper	469.5	(30.0)
Rubber Goods	159.7	(19.4)
MONEY		per cent
Money Supply, January 10,1983		1.4
Bank Deposits		1.7
Foreign Exchange Assets		(1.7)

* 1969–70 = 100

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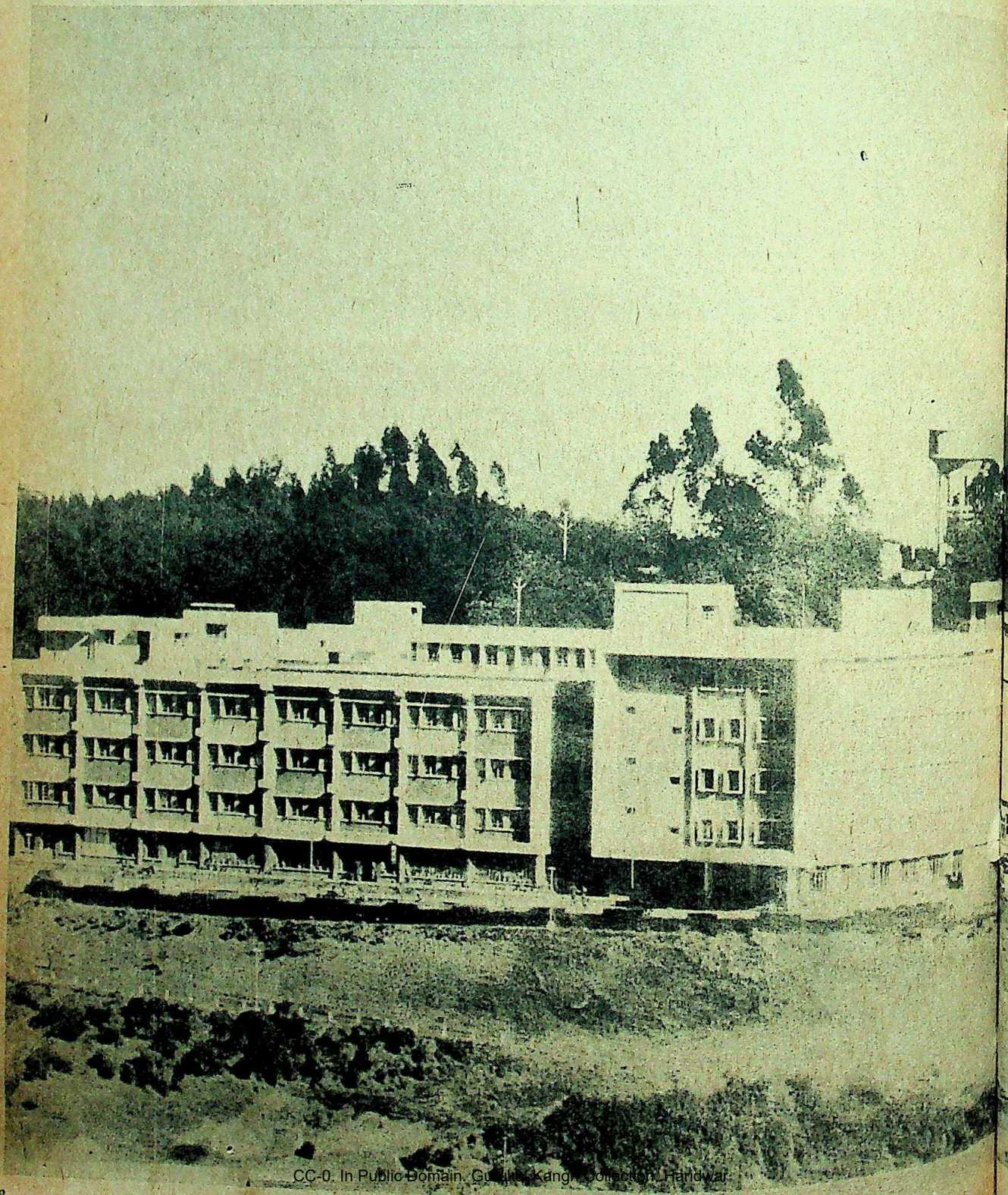

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ELECTIONS

From Pillar To Post

ELECTORAL battles are getting increasingly abrasive and bitter in India and their results ever more devastating for the party system. Politics is tending to become war by other means. The first casualty in war, everybody knows, is the truth; several years ago, Philip Knightley published an impressive book to prove this old dictum with stunning empirical evidence drawn from a number of wars, from the Crimean to the Vietnam. In India's war-by-other means also, missiles made of highly explosive rhetorics are being fired with reckless disregard of the ground rules of a gentle game called democracy. Electoral rhetorics have as little resemblance to realities as Iago to Hamlet. Each election in recent years has been a body blow to the party system that has managed India's parliamentary democracy somehow for 35 years. Each election shows that the real battle is not between parties. It is between the electorate and the party system.

Since the party system is dominated by the ruling incarnation of the Indian National Congress, each election is essentially an interaction of acceptance or rejection between it and the electorate. The electorate has been vacillating between hugging and rejecting the ruling Congress party, and in that process, steadily liberating itself from the "Congress System". On January 5, 10 per cent of India's total electorate voted in the two southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. For the first time since Independence, the voters threw the ruling Congress out of power. These voters in northern India had done it first in 1967, and overdone it 10 years later in 1977. The electorate is looking clearly for alternatives to the Congress in power. As long as a stable, credible alternative doesn't emerge, the voters will be running from the Congress post to the pillar of one or more of the opposition groups, whipping them into coalitions which may or may not last. The big question of Indian politics —the one we haven't even tried to answer—is whether the failure of a national opposition alternative has given birth to a rush of regional parties, or whether the basically regional character of the opposition parties doesn't permit the evolution of a national alternative to the ruling Congress.

Congress Culture: Realities seem to be closer to the latter than the former half of the question just framed. None of the "national" parties has a national support base; none can claim a visible legislative presence in even a majority of the states. reasons for the fragmentation of the Opposition lie in the his of the freedom struggle, in the "umbrella" character of the C gress party until the early '70s, and in the sociology of Indian litics. The Congress rallied most of the political groups unde tricolour during the freedom struggle; those factions that not within the Congress also revolved around it in a single p cal constellation. That's why no political party in India is fr the Congress culture. What should or should not be relations with the Congress has been the pathological o sion of all opposition groups including the united and div communist movement.

The party system cannot be seen in isolation from a ho other institutions and fo Maurice Duverger, wh regarded as the best au rity on political parties, in his latest book—a s of the Fifth Republic France—that for total sessment of a political s ty, it is necessary to s relations between poli parties and social forces impact of elections on party system, the role of tre groups, relations bet centre groups and grou the right and the left o centre, and the parall between institutional str res and the state of socie

The great contradic in the Indian political so today is between one-p dominance and the ma expansion and diversifica of the electorate. The do nant single party—C ress(I) in the '80s—ca longer claim the loyalty support of vast section the people, and yet there no viable alternatives— or left—the electorate confidently return to power. The result is a "wave" every year that sweeps the party-in-power out of office. These "wa strike the party system with such force that they threate bring it down in the foreseeable future. They also severely s India's institutional structure and the state of Indian society see this happening before our eyes, though we may not noti clearly.

Two questions loom on the political horizon as the pro of pulverising the party system goes on, at times with stun acceleration, at other times slowly and haltingly, with twists turns, as the Russians would put it. The first is whether Congress(I) still has the resilience to repair its flim-flam corpo body, rid itself of the spivs who have taken it over throug the country, and recapture the support of the masses, or whe

RAGHU RAI

The electorate has been vacillating between hugging and rejecting the ruling Congress party, and in that process, steadily liberating itself from the "Congress System".

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many flies have landed on the ointment and a hitherto own clock has been imposed on the party's petrified body, the alarm for the late '80s. The second is whether the sition—of which the anti-Congress(I) parties are only a part ot the whole—can, through trial and error, produce new institutions capable of filling the political, social and insti- al voids created by the gradual eclipse of the Congress.

mited Options: Numerous reports have appeared since the rm results suggesting that the long-standing practitioners of ence of governance have woken up to the urgency of s, purges and a general clean-up. Anonymous central have been credited with ideas and suggestions which, if ented, could salvage much of the lost image of ess(I). If organisational elections are held, inner-party racy is restored, chief ministers are not made and unmade Delhi but are freely elected by the respective Congress(I) ure parties; if graft and corruption is put down with an and, whimsical interference with the administration stop- nd the political process restored to the track of probity nesty, the ruling party can cer- recapture the lost support of asses. That nothing on these as been done since the great in the south is no conclusive e that nothing can or will be Indira Gandhi has sprung sur- on her countrymen in the past. do it again. Perhaps.

r options, however, are se- imited in the '80s. She cannot to garner durable political har- y merely re-arranging the furni- epairing the bathroom and g the brass in the Congress(I) She cannot regain her image of ecause the inventory of electri- ogans has been exhausted. Nor repeat 1971 which made her men see her as a living Durga. to live and do with an econo- increasing distress, a herd of that hover around her sari- shrunken flows of foreign aid, g gaps between imports and and the long chill of a world n. In the midst of all these and more, she must meet ngly radicalised demands of nationalities like the Sikhs e Assamese. She must cope e swelling pride of Telugus, may, in no time, bring about swelling tides of Maratha, and Oriya prides. And, in the midst of all this st fight elections, not so much with the opposition parties the electorate with which she is no longer in rapport.

unken Empire: These elections at the state level are now o chop away the pillars and the corners of the Congress(I) The Union territory of Delhi has seldom been a strong- the Congress party in power, thanks largely to its refugee Though the demography of Delhi has changed remarka- the last 15 years, its proletariat now drawn from the rural poor of neighbouring states, the Delhi electorate re- tilted in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and it be surprising if it gains control of either the Council or unicipal Corporation or both. Nobody seems to know whether the other parties in the fray will eat away the anti-Congress(I) or the anti-BJP votes.

In Assam, the two parties that are contesting the poll, Congress(I) and the left-and-democratic front, are both opposed to the agitationists. The only point one can make in favour of the Assam poll therefore is that it will clarify both popular support and popular opposition—regionwise and numberwise—to the anti-foreigner agitation. The agitation is led by the upper caste elites of the Brahmaputra valley; the minorities—Muslims, Bengalis, Ahoms and tribals are either opposed to, or alienated from, the agitation. The anti-foreigner agitation is also severely anti-communist. The left groups, especially the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), have, however, expanded their support bases significantly since the poll of 1978. The party's membership has more than doubled from 4,000 to 8,212; the membership of the Kisan Sabha, its peasant front, has raced up to 1,12,000 from 42,000, while the strength of its youth front, SFI stands at 30,000 (from 27,000 in 1978). It is the expansion of the rural base of the CPI-M that lends some brightness to its electoral chances.

It is easier to guess what the prime minister will not do than what she will.... She will not go in for a mid-term poll in 1983 unless she is convinced that a mid-term poll in 1984 will bring in a bleaker harvest than one this year.

In 1978, the Congress(I) could win only 26 seats in a house of 126, one less than the left parties, while Janata had run away with a whopping 53. It is unlikely that support for the Congress(I) has increased among Muslims, tribals, tea-garden workers and Ahoms, who have traditionally stood by the party.

Sagging Image: If the voter turnout proves to be convincingly small, say 30 per cent, the agitationists will have inflicted a crushing defeat on both Congress(I) and the left-and-democratic front. Even a victory in Assam, then, will not improve the sagging electoral image of Congress(I). Nor will it bring the tangled foreigner issue one inch nearer solution. On the contrary, the elections will complete the capture of the agitation by extremists.

Step by step, the ruling party is set to lose India's "war by other means". At the current pace, the process may be completed in the next five years. The whole world will be watching if Mrs Gandhi can arrest this process and bring about a renewal of the Congress system.

Meanwhile, it is easier to guess what the prime minister will not do than what she will. She will probably not repeat the mistake she made in the south: stake her personal leadership and charisma on the uncertain mood of the voters in Delhi and Assam. Although she will lead her party's campaign, she appears to have decided to leave the electoral battle mainly to lesser leaders. She will not go in for a mid-term poll in Maharashtra this year. Nor for a mid-term poll in 1983, unless she is convinced that a mid-term poll in 1984 will bring in a bleaker harvest than one this year.

Objective calculations suggest that if she were to go in for a mid-term parliamentary poll in 1983, Congress(I) could return with a bare simple majority. The prospects may be worse in 1984 if the economic pie gets smaller. Even if she tries to replace the parliamentary with the presidential system, it is likely to be opposed by at least 40 to 50 of her partymen.

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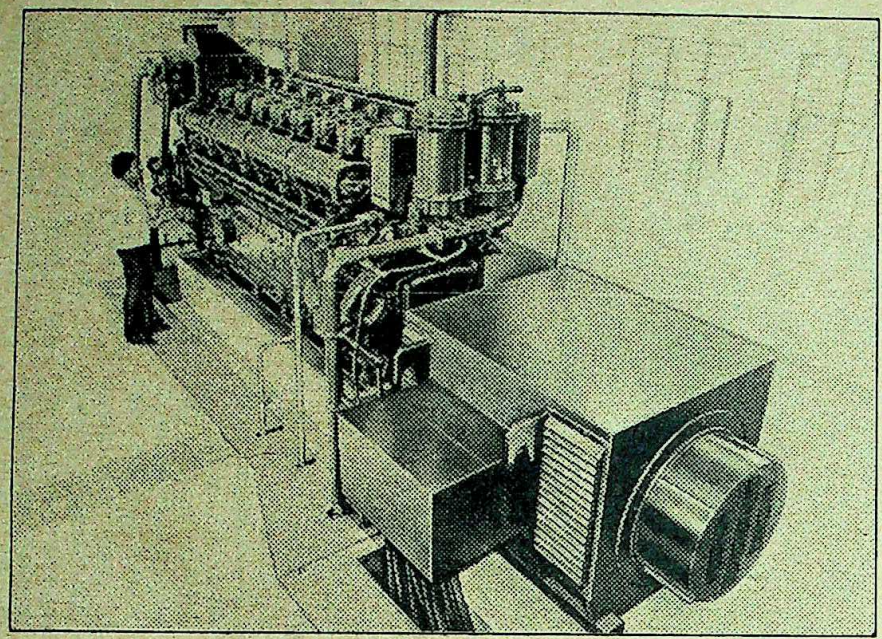

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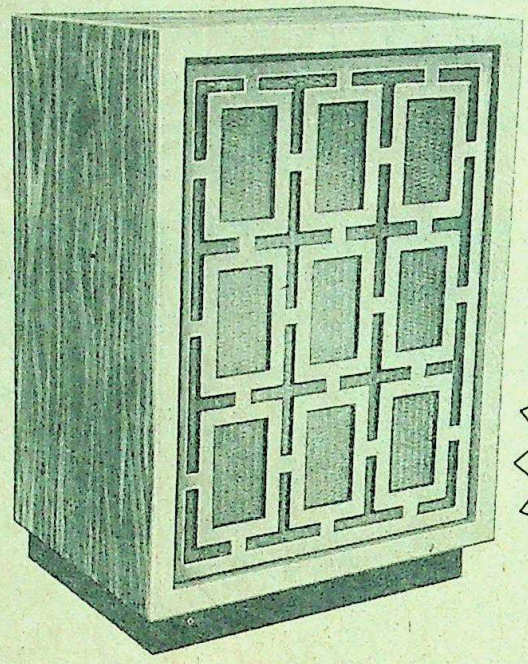

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SCALES

umbling In The Ranks

A PROPOSED pay revision in the Indian Police Service (IPS) threatens to blow up into a major confront- n between the different services of the ernment of India. Early last month Cabinet sub-committee took a secret sion recommending the upgrading of pay-scale of the deputy inspector eral (DIG) rank in the police. News of decision has yet to filter down, but the cadres, whose officers handle the file the top brass of the army who have en wind of the decision are already up rms.

The Cabinet decision is seen by the r services not merely as a question of easing the salary of one particular po- rank, but as a dangerous move which upset the inter-service hierarchy.

Salaries and status have ys been closely linked in services. Traditionally the y of a DIG is on par with deputy collector or the ty commissioner and bri- er. But with the increment ill be possible for a DIG's y to outstrip the senior- deputy commissioner's This is seen in the civil ces as a sinister move to the age-old warrant of edence which was laid in British times and e hierarchy has been up- by various pay commis- set up by the Govern- of India. Under the war- of precedence, the DIG s below the district collec- eputy commissioner and the district e. Traditionally, the pay-scale for adiers in the army and its equivalent s, air commodores and commodores he air force and navy have always higher than the pay-scales for the s.

Before the Cabinet proposal becomes the Cabinet sub-committee's decision have to be vetted by the Law Ministry then approved by 50 per cent of the s.

Criticism: Perturbed by the proposal an *ad hoc* revision in IPS pay-scales, the y Chief's Branch last fortnight sent a to the prime minister, protesting ost the move and warning that it ld only lead to further demoralisation e armed forces, already upset over the that over the years their status has been eroded and there is greater parity now between army and police brass. "The army is a very hierarchical service and it is dangerous to play around with the hierarchy of government servants in this fashion. The piecemeal taking up of a case may solve the problem of a small number but it creates a backlash," said a lieutenant general at army headquarters. He felt that if the IPS pay-scales are amended on the basis of the Cabinet sub-committee's recommendations, confusion would arise not at the secretariat but in the districts, when the army is called into civilian areas during riots, relief work and insurgencies. "Is a major-general with 25 to 30 year service expected to be equated with a DIG with 16 years'?" the general asked.

The pay-scale for brigadiers in the army—Rs 2,200 to Rs 2,400—has always been higher than that of the DIG's at Rs 2,000 to Rs 2,250. If the pay-scale revisions proposed by the Cabinet sub-committee occur, the IPS selection grade officer's pay will increase from Rs 1,800 to Rs 1,800–2,000 and the IPS super-time scale for the post of DIG will remain at Rs 2,000–2,500 but with 50 per cent of the posts of DIG to be in the scale of Rs 2,250–2,500.

The IAS lobby in Delhi has taken an equally strong objection to what it sees as a threat to the status of the service. In an unprecedented move, last fortnight they sent a memorandum to all state IAS associations. The memorandum calls for a reconsideration of the proposed *ad hoc* revision of selection grade and super-time scales of the IPS. The need for an upward revision of the pay-scales of all government services cannot be denied as the existing scales are "most unrealistic", the memorandum says. But, it warns that this kind of *ad hoc* revision of the IPS pay-scales would cause "discontent and demoralisation" in other services. The IAS would be particularly affected as the roles of the IPS and the IAS are closely linked at the district and state administration levels.

Police View: The Cabinet decision comes in the wake of representations from the IPS association that there is a demoralising stagnation in the service at the upper levels, particularly in comparison with the IAS. In the IPS cadre of around 2,300 there are only 250 DIG's and 50 officers of the rank of inspector general (IG) and above. The highest rank in the IPS is a director general (DG) of police, to the Government of India which is still a step below a full secretary. There are only around a dozen in DG's in the entire country in contrast with the approximately 25 IAS secretaries to the Government of India. The IAS cadre which has a strength of 4,000 has a much higher percentage of additional secretaries and joint secretaries.

Said an IPS officer: "The IAS has always been the pampered service and since all the key decisions are made by officers of this cadre, what they say counts." Attempts by other services to get better terms are often seen as a threat to the IAS. Recently in Maharashtra, a controversy arose when the IGP was upgraded to a DG level but the IAS maintained that he would remain "administratively inferior" to the state home secretary, even though normally a DG's rank is equivalent to an additional chief secretary. Last fortnight the Uttar Pradesh Provincial Civil Service, at its annual general body meeting, accused the IAS of using "obstructionist tactics" to block all promotional avenues for others.

Terming the "so-called stagnation claim by the IPS lobby" as a "myth", the IAS memorandum says: "One has only to see the proliferation in the ranks of the IG in the states, which until only a few years back had only one post of IG and today there are about a dozen. In addition, the new rank of DG has been created recently."

Administrators' Objections: The IAS also argues that while the quantum of work for the post of DIG may have increased in the states, their span of control and area of command have shrunk in size. On their own jobs, IAS officers claim

The Cabinet sub-committee's decision is seen by the other services not merely as a question of increasing the salary of one particular police rank, but as a dangerous move which will upset the inter-service hierarchy.

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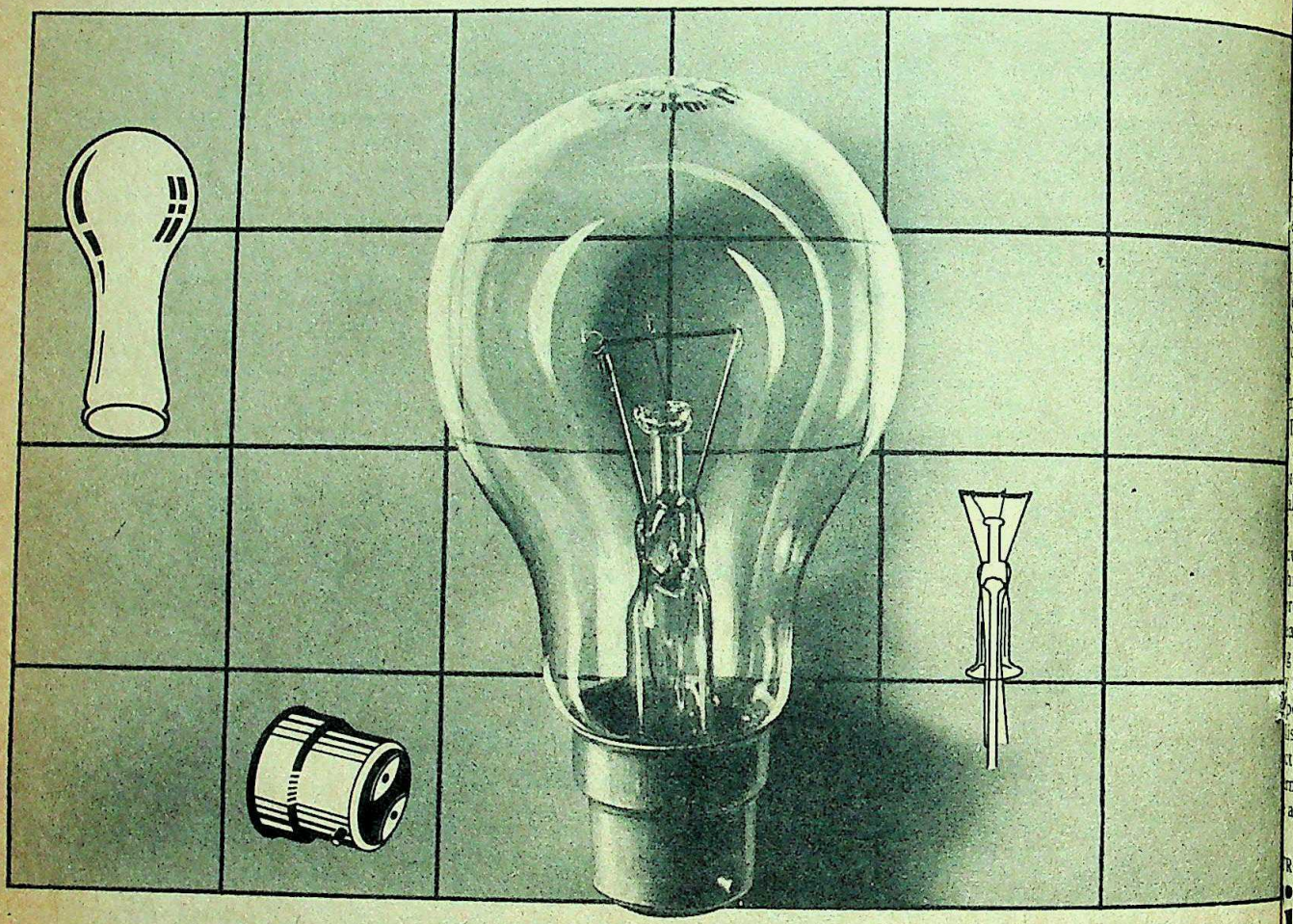

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not only has the workload of a ct collector or deputy commissioner eased, the job content and responsibili- as undergone a complete transforma- with the process of planned develop- They complain that "there has been ecognition of these additional respon- ties on the district collector/deputy missioner." The pay-scale of Rs -2,500 for the district collectors and ty commissioners, which is also the nt scale for DIG's, is available only to IAS district collectors and deputy missioners who are in the selection and in charge of important districts. The memorandum concludes by g: "The Government may keep the submission in view and defer the osed revision of the IPS pay-scale until per evaluation of the salary struc- of various services is done by a pay mission."

The silent conflict between the ser- could well explode into the open if G pay hike goes through. But what is ke in this debate is not the question slight increase in salary for one ular post in the IPS, it is a basic issue hich service takes precedence. Under resent Constitution, the civil servant ant to be in charge with the police orders from the IAS officer. Since is inextricably linked to some degree position, a distortion could upset the ished order of command at the t level. The steel frame of the nment at any rate sees the present as just such a threat.

—COOMI KAPOOR

RAL SECRETARIAT

ivil War

NION Home Minister Prakash Chand Sethi has elevated the art of governance to a fine degree of petti- ry. Political interference in the ucracy is not unusual, but Sethi is iting a penchant for intervention in nnel promotions. In the process, he eightened the siege mentality of the al Secretariat Service (CSS), which is antly tussling with the more powerful n Administrative Service (IAS) lobby.

Last fortnight the Central Secretariat p 'A' Officers' Association was em- d in yet another grim struggle to re- one of Sethi's capricious decisions. ecember 9 last year, when the Home ry's Department of Personnel and inistrative Reforms (DPAR) which es all Central Government appo- nts, issued a list of 54 promotions the under-secretary to the deputy secretary level, it was discovered that seven names had been added to the 'outstanding' category that topped the list.

The insertion was effected the day before the list was made public, and Home Ministry sources say that Sethi was instrumental in overruling Minister of State P. Venkatasubbaiah, who had approved the original list. Technically the DPAR was within its rights in adding the seven names, but the irregularity arose because the list, originally due for issue on November 2, was postponed by five weeks.

Frustration: The situation has been rendered all the more frustrating for the seven under-secretaries elbowed out of the original list as a result of this manoeuvre because promotion to the deputy secretary level, being within the government's Class I grade, does not come under the purview of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). While 'outstanding' promotees usually do not exceed 10 per cent of the total, the 1982 list contains 13 such names, almost 25 per cent of the total. Worst of all, points out the Officers' Association in a letter to U.C. Agarwal, secretary (Services), two of the beneficiaries N. Seshadri and Data Ram of the Department of Industrial Development, have not gained at all from their promotions—Seshadri retired from service on December 31, and Data Ram exactly a month later. Seshadri was among the seven last-minute insertions, and had originally stood 90th in the 1982 Selection Grade Civil List of the CSS, too junior for normal elevation. Service rules stipulate that officiating arrangements cannot be made for a period of less than 45 days, so Seshadri and Data Ram did not even take over their new postings.

Sethi: penchant for intervention

That was not all. The aggrieved officers' suspicion was raised on another point. Of the seven late insertions in the list, four stood consecutively 80th until 83rd in the Civil List, and the three others were 90th, 91st and 93rd—a clubbing that just did not coincide with the candidates' service records.

"The demoralisation caused in our ranks by this surreptitious operation can be imagined," says a senior CSS officer. "The fact that the four-member Departmental Promotion Committee of secretaries succumbed to pressure has caused a lot of disaffection and distrust."

Stalemate: What has irked the officers even more is the fact that when the promotions list was originally drawn up, in early October last year, it had contained 56 names—but two were put in 'sealed covers' because they were not cleared by the Vigilance Department. No substitution was made for these two drop-outs. Moreover, seven officers included in the list—apart from Seshadri and Data Ram—will be retiring sometime this year, and may not officiate in their new designations at all.

The Officers' Association is now trying to get the DPAR to issue a 'supplementary list', an accepted practice whereby extra promotions are sanctioned, taking into consideration expected retirements or deaths. The stalemate, meanwhile, has gone up to the Prime Minister's Secretariat. The association was encouraged to do so because of the promptness with which the Prime Minister's Secretariat reacted to news of the struggle between the UPSC and Sethi, which had resulted in 140 promotions from the section officer to the under-secretary level being frozen while Sethi tried to get the UPSC to promote his private secretary, S.R. Bhatia, out of turn (INDIA TODAY, January 15).

Late in the evening on January 7, the Prime Minister's Secretariat got on the phone to Venkatasubbiah, the minister of state in charge of personnel affairs, and ordered him to remedy matters forthwith. The clerical staff of the DPAR had already gone home, but a skeleton group was marshalled at short notice, and the four people who had originally constituted the promotions panel—the UPSC's Mrs R.O. Dhan and joint secretaries K.C. Sodhia, Lalkhama and T. Ramaswamy—summoned and asked to endorse the very list they had earlier drawn up and stood firm on. "The prime minister was extremely upset when she heard of Sethi's needless interference," says a highly placed sources in the Home Ministry, "and ordered that the original list should be placed before her that very night."

But pettifoggery and interference do have some adverse effects. Joint Secretary Ramaswamy, who had been in charge of personnel and had fought hardest against Bhatia's irregular inclusion in the promotions list, was transferred in December to the inconsequential Foreigners Department as a measure of Sethi's displeasure. So far there has been no protest over Ramaswamy's patently unjust transfer. "It was probably felt that Sethi was entitled to a small victory to counterbalance the dressing-down he got from the prime minister," says a disgusted UPSC official.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

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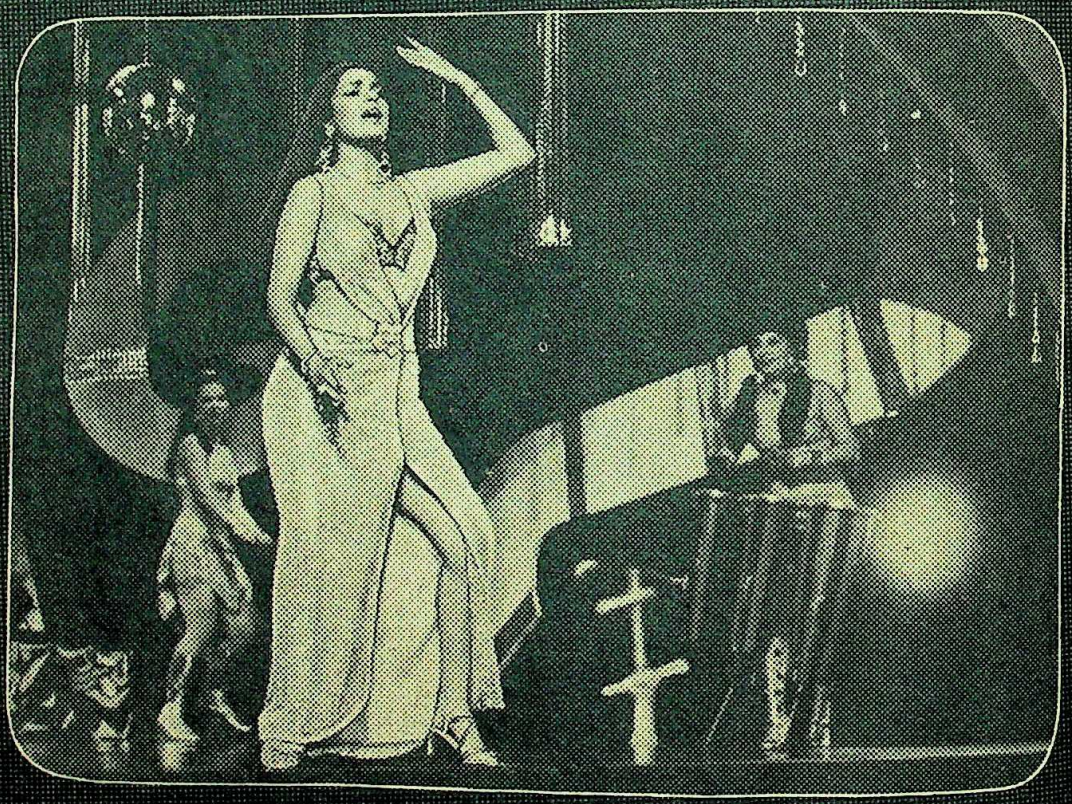
Do you remember Zeenat doing the seductive 'baat ban jaye' number in 'Qurbani'? And your eight-year-old holding on to your hand. And that excited whisper: "Isn't she the prettiest girl in the world, papa?"



That was the year Star & Style scooped the Dharam-Hema marriage.

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Star & Style has been doing
nvestigative reporting before the term
as coined.
In the half decade between 1975-80
e magazine reported the
akhee-Gulzar split, Vinod Khanna's
ajneesh trip and the tempestuous
anjay-Zeenat affair.

Star & Style

Fifteen Glorious Years!

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TRENDS

Breaking Out An

WHAT DO a young ideologue from Calcutta, a chartered accountant trained in London, a former TV producer from Delhi and a paediatrician from Pune have in common? Very little, except that they are all in the film making business today and, last fortnight, their latest efforts were on show in the Indian Panorama—the strongest section of an otherwise jaded Ninth International Film Festival devoted to promoting serious Indian cinema.

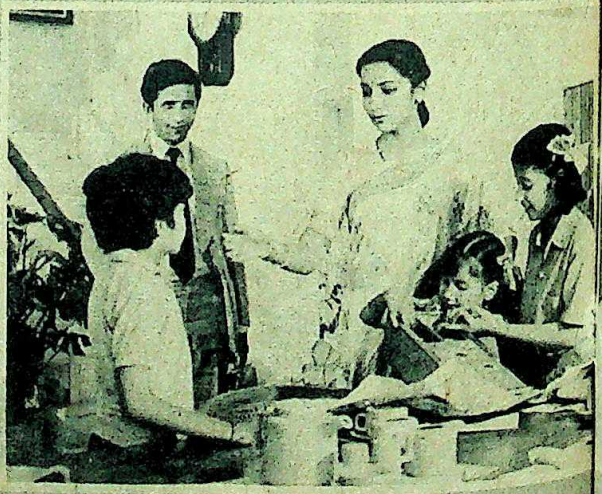
Most of the films selected for the Panorama section were as different in idea and concept, theme and content as the backgrounds of their directors: Utpalendu Chakraborty's *Chokh* (The Eye), about the horrors infesting the corridors of a Calcutta hospital, is a world far removed from Sai Paranjpye's latest black comedy, *Katha* which wryly updates the ancient hare-and-the-tortoise fable in the contemporary reality of a Bombay chawl; Jabbar Patel's *Umbartha* in Marathi, also known as *Subah* in its Hindi version, is a strong feminist statement, showing what happens to an upper class woman when she leaves the safety of her home to help less privileged women, whereas in Shekhar Kapoor's slickly-made *Masoom*, the upper class woman who stays contentedly at home also finds her peace shattered by a twist of plot so freakish that it raises the standard of the commercial Hindi domestic melodrama to unforeseen heights.

Very little as these films do have in common, they are also far from being great movies: each of them, in one way or another, appears flawed. But their appearance signals a new mood on the part of the directors, a determined, almost aggressive bid to get their films to reach the widest possible audience. Not only are these directors challenging the accepted norms that label one kind of film making as "art cinema" and another as "commercial cinema", by seeking out new modes of finance, production and distribution, they are convinced that the stronghold eastablished by the commercial cinema can be broken and their films need no longer languish in the cans. Because, they claim they are not presuming upon their audience's intelligence, or lack of it, their films will find an audience. Or create one where none existed before.

Commercial Success: Sai Paranjpye, a former TV producer, theatre director and children's film maker, who broke into feature films in 1978 with *Sparsh* (a film about the blind which continues to languish in the cans) had a huge commercial success with *Chashme Buddoor* two years ago. Says she: "We have a strange, unwritten code that the artistically made

Paranjpye (above); Shah, Sheikh and Naval in *Katha*: contemporary saga

"We have a strange, unwritten code that the artistically made film should not succeed at the box-office and the commercial film must never make sense. The time has come to challenge these norms."



Kapoor (above); Shah and Azmi with child artistes in *Masoom*: slices of real life

"My film *Masoom* is a way of telling the industry, 'okay you bastards, you've put me down for seven years, maligned me, screamed at me, now I'm going to show you how it can be done'."

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Breaking Even

Patel (above): Smita and other actresses in *Umbartha*: strong feminist statement

"Why does a film maker make films? To make sure that the man-on-the-street sees them and understands them, not because they can be shown at Cannes or Berlin or end up winning some obscure Western award."

Chakraborty (above) Om Puri in *Chokh*: powerful story

"I am hundred per cent sure that my film will not flop, in fact it will be a hit. If it flops something is wrong with me and I will go back to teaching history."

film should not succeed at the box-office and the commercial film must never make sense. The time has come to challenge these norms. I would never compromise my aesthetic values or common sense in order to ensure commercial success. But then, I feel that that is no longer necessary." Adds Utpalendu Chakraborty, winner of the Silver Peacock, the Jury's Special Award at the Film Festival: "Because I have a commitment to my people, I am looking for the widest possible audience for my films. If my movies fail to get a reaction from the audience, then it is my fault as director, not that of the audience—I have failed, not they. There is no way a film will not succeed if it is true to its essence."

A lean and bearded Chakraborty speaks in the impassioned, propagandist tone that infects his films. At 34, he is two feature films old, but has lived life in the raw. A totally different kettle of fish from the Aparna Sens and Shekhar Kapoors of the urban world, he went from college in Calcutta, as a member of the CPI(M-L), to work among tribals on the West Bengal-Orissa-Bihar border for five years; becoming terribly sick he returned to teach history in a school in Calcutta. Disenchanted both with the Naxalite movement and West Bengal politics—"the system is no different in West Bengal than in any other state"—he first produced a documentary on political prisoners, before embarking on his first feature *Moyna Tandanta* (Post Mortem), based on his experience among the tribals. Then two years ago, while recovering from another illness in a Calcutta hospital, he began to scribble a script based on a true-life documentary account he read in *Frontier*, a left wing Calcutta weekly, of what happend to the corneas of two prisoners, Kista Gowd and Bhumiah, who were hanged in an Andhra Pradesh jail during the Emergency.

Coupled with his own experience of hospital life in Calcutta, Chakraborty produced the gripping narrative of *Chokh*, in which two parties, a rich jute millowner and a poor villager, befriended by a local taxi-driver, are competing for a pair of corneas, donated by a hanged prisoner, that are to arrive in the depleted reserves of an eye bank in a Calcutta hospital. As the camera horrifically captures the peeling walls, battered patients and intrigue-ridden politics of Indian hospital life, the story takes on savage twists: the taxi-driver, it turns out, was once a chauffeur to the ruthless millowner, now furiously pulling political strings to obtain the corneas for his son; and the hanged prisoner who has donated his eyes was once a trade union leader in the jute mill, sentenced to

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death for murdering the millowner's manager and brother.

So dramatic and simply told is Chakraborty's story that, despite what critics call its "sledge-hammer approach" for overstatement, its director admits: "I am hundred per cent sure that my film will not flop, in fact it will be a hit. If it flops something is wrong with me and I will go back to teaching history." Made on a shoe-string budget of Rs 6,39,000 it was produced by the West Bengal Government—Chakraborty not only shot within his budget, he returned a token Rs 175 to the Government after paying professional actors like Om Puri, Madhabi Mukerjee, Anil Chatterjee and Shyamanand Jalan as well as all his technicians—but to prove his point that good films can be made cheaply and ahead of schedule he was able to complete his shooting in a flat 18 days even though he had estimated 25 days. Not only does Chakraborty's aim of making good, cheap films preclude the idea of commercial success at the box-office, his radical fervour does not narrow his feelings for another kind of cinema. Chakraborty's cinema, a new voice for regional films, proves that a socially motivated movie with a strong dramatic centre, can be made cheaply and draw full houses at the box-office. In Bombay, the same is being proved by other directors who are cracking the hard-boiled theories of the commercial circuits.

Outmoded System: Transposed into the out-and-out commercial factory of the Bombay industry, Chakraborty's ideas appear no more radical than those of Shekhar Kapoor, a 35-year-old former chartered accountant and management consultant from London, who arrived nearly 10 years ago in Bombay in search of stardom, never found it, drifted around doing bit parts while waiting for a chance to make his first movie. All those years of closely observing the industry operate haven't gone waste, nor has the hurt of having to sell his pretty face as a model rubbed off. *Masoom*, his first feature, produced by a man called Devi Dutt who had courageously backed Govind Nihalani's award-winning *Aakrosh* a few years ago, is already being tipped inside the industry as the smash hit of 1983. And Kapoor today talks with the same mixture of bitterness and hope that Chakraborty does, though their contexts are entirely different. Kapoor's theory is roughly this: if you can't beat the system, join it, but show them that their product is outmoded and shoddy. "I've given them (the industry) a film, a better film within their accepted structure but my next step should be to tear down that structure," he admits.

And *Masoom*, made in the commercial mould with songs, pretty scenes in the hills, and a high level of histrionics from performers like Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, Saeed Jaffrey and a cast of splendidly-directed children, is a tear-jerker extraordinary, in the directorial genre of the American hit *Kramer vs Kramer*, "a thoroughly exploitative film, designed to wrench your emotions but cleverly camouflaged", says Kapoor himself. The story of a happily-married, affluent couple with two children whose domestic peace is suddenly shattered by the arrival of a third child—the product of the husband's casual sexual liaison with another girl many years ago—*Masoom* is sending jitters down the spines of many a commercial director not only because it is better scripted, better directed and edited but because, eventually, it remains as true to its milieu as, it could be argued, do the films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Jabbar Patel, Aparna Sen or Utpalendu Chakraborty. As Kapoor puts it: "I have tried to put in a slice of real life into all the unreality. If I go on putting more and more slices of real life in my subsequent films, I may, in the end, get a film about real life." At the same time, Kapoor harbours no delusions about what the box-office success of *Masoom* may do to him: "*Masoom* is a way of saying, 'Okay, you bastards, you've put me down for seven years, maligned me, screamed at me, now I'm going to show you'." But before the big banners begin to queue up at his door—as they already are—to nab him as director at any cost, Kapoor says he wants to stop and think how will he use the clout that *Masoom* brings him?

Made on a comparatively low budget of Rs 25 lakh—for a commercial film just lower than *36 Chowringhee Lane* which cost Shashi Kapoor Rs 26 lakh—*Masoom* is selling for Rs 6 lakh a territory, making it profitable even before its release. Slightly more expensive is Sai Paranjpye's *Katha* which, budgeted for Rs 25 lakh, ended up costing Rs 32 lakh, according to its producer Suresh Jindal, who has produced films like *Rajnigandha* and *Shatranj Ke Khilari*. *Katha* could as easily fetch per territory what *Masoom* did but Jindal says he is holding out for a better price "because we have to prove to the big guns that we have arrived ...there is a demand for our kind of cinema, so why should there be a bigger price? Don't directors like Sai, actors like Naseeruddin Shah and our technicians deserve to be paid better."

Sai Paranjpye admits that after her *Chashme Buddoor* set a precedent at the box-office (it cost about Rs 20 lakh but could easily have netted its producer Gul Anand five times as much though she directed for a flat fee), she refuses to work in less-than-comfortable circumstances. "My days of impoverished film making are over. I may be regarded as a weirdo in the industry, but that's because producers feel insecure about me entering their system, not the other way around. I was

"All I would like is that my producer never loses money on the kind of films I make. I would be happy if he came back to me to direct another film for him."

—APARNA SEN

"I have to sell my movies at a better price because we have to prove to the industry that our kind of cinema has arrived, and there is a growing market for it everywhere."

—SURESH JINDAL

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ged with offers to direct after the suc-
s of *Chashme Buddoor* but I turned
m all down. I will direct on my own
ms, not those of the producer." Signifi-
tly, Paranjpye is now doing a movie
film star-turned-producer Dharmendra,
ay-out extravaganza, "almost a fairy-tale
in a fictitious country". At the same
e, she has a couple of serious projects
hand, quite different from the comedies
have established her reputation,
ong them a film of Tendulkar's play
haram Binder.

Breaking Ground: For Paranjpye and
poor, working in the melting pot of the
mbay industry where the dividing lines
ween art and commerce, big-budget
low-budget, superstars and star-actors
daily becoming fuzzier, it is easier to
ak new ground. More myths about the
llibility of the commercial system have
n shattered in the last decade than ever
ore. Big-budget, multi-star-cast movies
known to bomb at the box-office even
re frequently than they succeed; so
ming has the scale of disaster lately
n that even their best-known producer,
nmohan Desai, has sworn that *Coolie*
be his last big number. The insupera-
dependence on the star system has also
n shaken by Amitabh Bachchan's pro-
ged convalescence after his serious ac-
ent on the sets last year.

The biggest distributors and producers
a few years ago have begun to hedge
r bets on future projects: there seems
room for films like Raj Kapoor's *Prem*
: B.R. Chopra has changed his tune
making successful, and cheaply-made
ckies like *Insaaf Ka Tarazu* and
Nikaah. Even Tarachand Barjatya, one of the oldest established producers in the business of domestic melodramas, in a recent diatribe against the Government for increased entertainment tax, admits: "More than 70 per cent of pictures produced in the Indian industry do not recover their investment..." and that "attracted by the glamour (of the industry) new people continue to enter the production and distribution fields, lose their money and walk out, followed by others who take their place. No publicity is given to those who lose all their money and are on the streets because in show business only tall things are publicised."

With the commercial industry racked by an array of doubts, does the regional film maker operating in Pune or Calcutta, Hyderabad, Trivandrum, Bangalore or Ahmedabad, stand a chance to get his films to reach a wider audience? For years, stalwarts of serious regional cinema like Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen have been satisfied with the audiences they find in their own states; and their accomplishment has only been recognised nationally following international acclaim for their films. Today, younger film makers like Jabbar Patel in Maharashtra and Aparna Sen in Bengal are seeking to break regional barriers by looking for unconventional modes of finance and propagating the formula of the two-language film.

Patel, the prematurely greying paediatrician who runs a 25-bed clinic together with gynaecologist wife in Daund, a railway junction town 40 miles from Pune, provides one answer. He has made his new film *Umbartha*, his fourth feature, in two languages, Marathi and Hindi. The Marathi version, running to packed houses in its 16th week in Pune, is already a huge success; consequently, Patel feels, that selling the Hindi version called *Subah* won't be the slightest problem. "After all, why does a film maker make films? To make sure that the man-on-the-street sees his films and understands them. You can't live on the fact that your film went to Cannes or Berlin or won some obscure award. So a film naturally becomes a commercial thing. There must be something obscene about a film that doesn't recover its money."

Encouraging Backing: Patel, a graduate of Pune Medical College, with a keen interest in theatre, had produced one of the most successful versions of *Ghasiram Kotwal* on stage before a producer approached him to direct a movie. His first film, *Samna* made in 1975 in retrospect appears to him "rather crude" and it was not till his third movie *Simhasan*, based on a reporter's journal of the goings-on inside party politics, that he really came into his own. He made the movie by taking a Rs 7 lakh loan from the Bank of Maharashtra which also paid for 15 prints. The film was an immediate commercial success—running 29 weeks in Pune—and with 17 per cent interest. Patel and his business partner paid back their bank loan in two years. The experience was so encouraging that Patel decided to produce his first colour feature, for which the Maharashtra Government offered a Rs 8 lakh incentive on box-office receipts, and went back to the Bank of Maharashtra in 1981 to produce a two-language film. *Umbartha*, starring bilingual actors like Smita Patil and Girish Karnad, is the result: a strong movie about a well-settled young mother who, living in the protected, well-provided-for precincts of a joint family, feels unfulfilled as a person. Her yearning for an identity of her own leads her to persuade her husband to let her accept a job as superintendent in a women's reform home some few hundred miles away. There, as she plunges to sort out the lives of deprived, often sexually debased women, and to run the home according to the dictates of her conscience, she becomes so absorbed in her new life that when she returns to her family she finds that her old one is cracking up.

Feminists feel the film will find a

"The system may not like our kind of films to succeed, but that is no reason for film makers to behave like martyrs. Why should they depend on the Government to release their films?"

—ADOOR GOPALAKRISHNAN

"There is a widespread interest in regional cinema in the cities. All we need is smaller, well-run theatres. they could be a huge commercial success and change the face of the industry."

—UMA DA CUNHA

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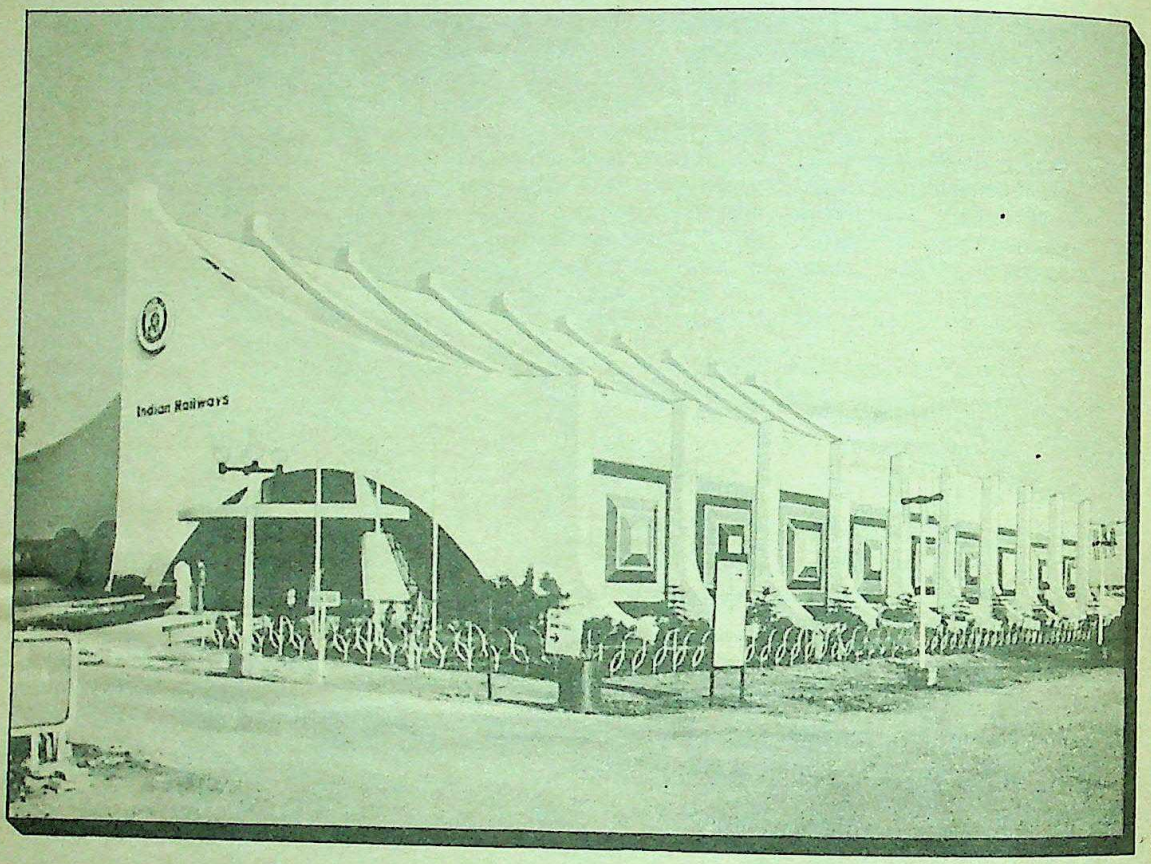
A quality exhibit!



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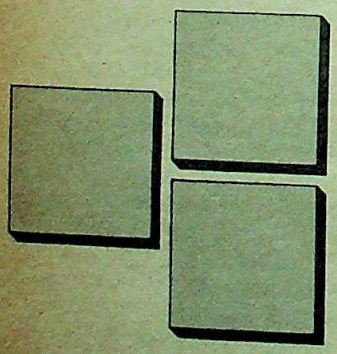

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ence anywhere, thereby, reassuring who says he was a little scared about film looking too regional. Other critics that, by putting in a lesbian sequence depicting the women's home as a able chamber of horrors, Patel has overstated his case. Says critic Aruna dev: "Yes, both Patel's *Umbartha* Chakraborty's *Chokh* are powerful cts with gripping stories. But we have et beyond effective story-telling to ce a truly great film."

Still, if Patel's two-language film for- works, it could prove one of the best out for reaching a wider audience on ional scale. Patel, from his own expe- e, says that making a film in two ages is in fact cheaper than most e think. He found it easy to find bi- al actors, using Dalit theatre perfor- and by shooting tightly, he found he could reach a ratio of one final to three to be used for both the thi and Hindi versions.

encouraged enough by uccess to embark upon ext project—a two-lang- version of Brecht's *Three Opera*.

n Calcutta, director na Sen who, after her *36 inghee Lane* two years about to embark on di- g her first Bengali film, that making a regional ith a Hindi version is a ound proposition. "In unge you can still make od film in colour for Rs 10 lakh. I'm sure I make two versions for Rs 15 lakh. All I want is that my cer should never lose money on the f films I make. I would be happy if me back to me and asked me to another feature."

door Gopalakrishnan, taking the approach of Satyajit Ray, disappro- esthetically of either making a two- age film or even having his films d. "It would look strange if my ters, dressed in traditional Kerala n, began to speak Hindi dialogue." lakrishnan believes that the only way al cinema can get a national sho- is to be able to establish a parallel tion circuit of smaller theatres of 400 seats. Most regional film makers but also feel that it is futile to d upon government agencies like the al Film Development Corporation which has been promising such a of "art cinemas" for nearly two de- "The only one they run in Bombay, the Akashvani, is so badly run, with virtually no promotion and publicity, that it is doubtful if it even pays its way through," says critic Uma da Cunha. Da Cunha feels that smaller cinemas, started by private enterprise and properly managed, programmed and publicised, could be hugely successful. "If Shashi and Jennifer Kapoor can make their Prithvi Theatre the hub of theatre activity in Bombay against all odds, then why can't a small 400-seater cinema house be successful?" She adds that there is so much interest in regional cinema in the cities that, four years ago when she helped in starting a film society for regional cinema in Bombay called "Drishti" she immediately found 400 eager members. Membership has dropped to nearly half because the society can't find a centrally located, small enough hall.

Gopalakrishnan, whose third film *Elippathayam* in over 12 years was financed by a Kerala businessman who is a cashew exporter with a belief in the cause of promoting good cinema, also feels that new directors unable to crack the distribution exhibition system must share the onus. "If the established system doesn't like the new kind of cinema succeeding, our film makers are as responsible by being lethargic. There is no cause for them to behave like martyrs. What are they doing to take their films to the audience?" Gopalakrishnan's own example demonstrates the trials faced by a director breaking ground: his second film, *Kodiyettam*, financed by a cooperative that he started with friends took five years to complete. "For one whole year it was lying in the laboratory because we ran out of money to print the film." But once it was completed, Gopalakrishnan released it in small towns where it was such a success that big cities automatically opened their doors. "Word just got around," he says of his experiment in being able to attack the circuit literally from a grass route. The way Gopalakrishnan sees it, looking for an audience is part of a film maker's job; his effort does not end with the process of creating, "it is the director's moral responsibility to find an audience... it is only out of frustration, creative frustration, that certain directors negate the audience".

Adoor Gopalakrishnan's film *Elippathayam*: a purist approach

And all among the new directors agree that there is willingness among audiences to look at their kind of cinema. "Because," Paranjpye points out, "the commercial cinema continues to underestimate their intellectual and emotional capacities. New audiences will simply not go on being blackmailed by boring old routines." In the experience of regional film makers, the NFDC has failed in its promise of providing a parallel exhibition channel; and Gopalakrishnan feels that many of the state-owned film development corporations are even worse run than the NFDC. In such a context, smaller cinemas can only become a reality if private enterprise sees them as commercially viable.

The capricious economics of the commercial industry only reiterate the point made by smaller film makers. According to Kapoor, audience tastes are changing so fast after the era ushered in by directors like Shyam Benegal, that "smaller theatres are an imminent reality. They would have emerged sooner had not the Amitabh Bachchan phenomenon occurred: fortunately or unfortunately he kept the industry going by the sheer force of his personality—it's his films that have kept the circuits running."

Statistics further stress the need for new cinemas, albeit smaller ones. The number of theatres in India increased from 10,562 in 1979–80 to a marginal 11,239 in 1981–82, with over 50 per cent of them concentrated in the southern states. With roughly 11,000 cinemas to serve a population of 68 crore people, even Unesco rates India among the lowest exhibition services—an average of 7.37 seats per thousand people whereas it recommends 30 seats per thousand for developing countries.

With such an abysmal lack of exhibition space, with lack of funds, and no distribution channels—84 of the 130 films financed by the NFDC in nearly 20 years are lying around in cans—it is remarkable that the spirit to make a new kind of movie, reach a new kind of audience has not died out. The direction taken by the innovators of the Indian cinema, in finding its voice and finding its viewing public, can only help the ferment in the industry to take a turn for the better.

— SUNIL SETHI

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HIMACHAL PRADESH

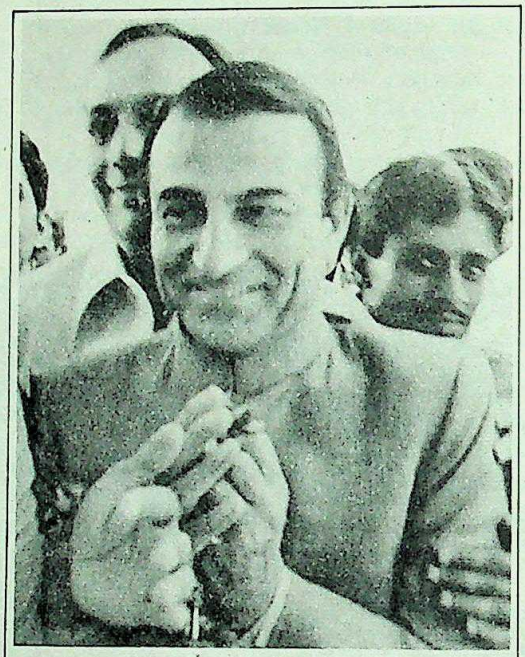
Scandals In The Snow

OBSCURITY is often the best form of security. While media hounds concentrate on happenings in larger states like Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, the real skeletons lie largely unexposed in the smaller, more inaccessible states where political crimes flourish unchecked. One prime example is the remote, hilly state of Himachal Pradesh where a series of scandals involving chief minister Ram Lal and his immediate family have gone largely unnoticed. Principal Correspondent PRABHU CHAWLA *and Chandigarh Correspondent* GOBIND THUKRAL *made separate trips to Simla last fortnight to investigate the scandals and also gauge their possible effect on Ram Lal's future. Their report:*

SHORTLY after assuming office last year, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Ram Lal pledged that he would retire from public life if any of his family members were involved in what was then a local timber smuggling scandal. By last fortnight, however, it was obvious that Ram Lal may find it necessary to eat his words since the snowballing scandal has not just implicated his family but threatens to put a premature end to his brief tenure in the chief minister's chair. Ram Lal's current precarious position stems from the damaging judgement delivered last fortnight by state Chief Justice Vyas Dev Misra who reopened the timber case after it had been virtually buried through political pressure.

Misra, acting on an anonymous letter alleging involvement of the chief minister's family in the scandal, ordered a retrial of the chief accused, Mast Ram Tanta, a forest contractor and a close friend of the chief minister. Having reviewed the files on the case and interrogated witnesses himself, Misra ruled that Tanta could be charged with the illegal felling and smuggling of timber—serious charges in a state where lumber is one of the main revenue-earners—and also charged that the chief minister's son, Jagdish Thakur and his son-in-law, Padam Singh, were enmeshed in this scandal.

In his hard-hitting 27-page judgement Justice Misra had made no effort to veil the fact that the involvement of well-connected persons had made this retrial necessary. Starting with the Directorate of Enforcement, which he accused of trying to "bury the case fathoms deep", he castigated everyone connected with the Tanta case. Elsewhere in his pioneering judgement, he said: "The whole police force was paralysed while dealing with this sensitive case. They seemed to have touched some hot stuff and allowed a miscarriage of justice." But the most stunning statement was: "It has come in the evidence that Tanta is a resident of Jubbal, home town of the chief minister. The wood was carried in the trucks owned by the chief minister's son and son-in-law. Therefore if the case was to be registered as suggested ...there was likelihood of the son and the son-in-law becoming co-accused."



Ram Lal may find it necessary to eat his words since the snowballing scandal has not just implicated his family but threatens to put a premature end to his brief tenure in the chief minister's chair.

Official Connivance: The convol course of the case against Tanta, through him the chief minister's ho hold, tells its own story. On October 1981, an anonymous report accu Tanta of illegal felling brought into a an Indian Police Service (IPS) o S.D. Minhas, who was then deput rector of enforcement. Sub-inspe Prem Prakash Sethi who investig the case found that Tanta had forg permit numbered 135/81-82, issued the divisional forest officer of R for transporting logs to the assi engineer of the Public Works De ment at Kot Khai. The original d nation had been changed to Simla Dhali to enable Tanta to trans 1,000 logs costing Rs 2 lakh acros state. Sethi also found that Tanta managed all this with the connivan the forest officials.

On November 7, Minhas ord the registration of a case against T and the forest officials under the I Penal Code (IPC) and the Forest Act for cheating, fraud, th legal felling and smuggling. At point the then director of enforce K.N. Kapoor, a senior IPS of stepped in and describing the ca "sensitive" sought the advice of officials like the chief secretary, sp secretary, vigilance, and Public P cutor R.K. Duggal. In the word Justice Misra the result was that denly everyone agreed that a small under Section 41-42 of the I Forest Act will do. Even the p prosecutor changed his opinion. H corded forgery is not directly pr and shut his eyes to the fact tha accused had used the forged p knowing it to be so." Duggal ca for special mention elsewhere. Misra said: "The public prosecuto acting under the instructions of state. The instructions evidently not to ask for imprisonment but on ask for punishment of fine."

Subsequent investigations show the enforcement authorities had negligent not only in enforcing state they had turned a blind eye to the Government's directives which state all such cases are to be booked under relevant sections of the IPC as well a voking the Indian Forest Act "so tha

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efit of such a provision is available in ing the accused punished and for ing the seized timber confiscated by the vernment." Statements in the state As- bly show that the directives have been rously applied in the case of small ers.

In the Tanta case, Minhas was oved from the scene and given an ure posting in Dharamshala. Final- n April 9, 1982, with Minhas out of way, a case was registered against ta under the Forest Act in Jubbal ce station which is within the chief ister's constituency. On April 26 the stigating officer recorded that he pened to meet Tanta at 6.45 a.m. at og. At 7 a.m. it was decided to st him and as he was unable to give ty, he was produced before Sub- ional Magistrate J.N. Borowalia. lic Prosecutor Duggal arrived taneously from Simla, an hours e from Theog. Tanta pleaded guilty was fined Rs 500—which he pro- d only after a few hours.

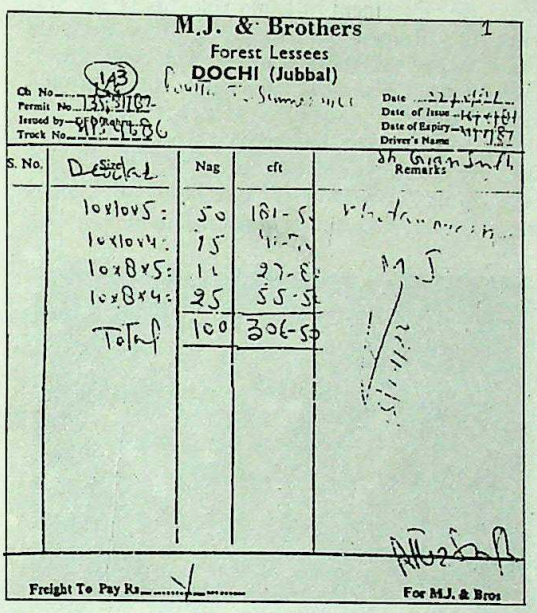
Judicial Initiative: That would been the end of the matter had a not received an anonymous letter ing his attention to the "unholy " in which the case was conclu- The letter alleged complicity een Tanta, the prosecution and walia. After going through all records of the investigation, a issued a notice of enhance- of punishment and the case be- n the high court in August last The Government, however, de- to take a firm stand on what titude would be as its officers among the accused. Only after etition filed by Tanta for spe- eave was dismissed by the Su- e Court did the Advocate Gen- nder Singh come out on the of an enhanced sentence. Said Misra: "Except for this expression of the intention of overnment, no serious content- was raised by the advocate gene- enhance the punishment of the ed." Interestingly enough, a who had been unable to pro- surety at Theog was now being ded by a band of legal lumina- former high court judge d Narain Mulla, former Pun- advocate general H.S. Sibal and wani Singh, a senior advocate. Apart from the attitude of the ernment, the actions of the key esses also proved far from help- Throughout the trial Kapoor, deputy inspector general of vi- gilance, Lashkari Ram, director of enforcement and Sethi's replacement Jit Singh Pujiar earned Misra's wrath for their reticence. Pujiar who was asked about the ownership of the trucks maintained a stony silence and only after being sent to the registry office twice, informed the court that the trucks belonged to the chief minister's son and son-in-law. Summing up the case Misra commented: "The whole conduct of the investigative agency as well of the public prosecutor leaves no doubt that they had entered into an understanding with the accused and the rest was an eyewash. It was apparently agreed between them that the accused would plead guilty, the public prosecutor would ask for maximum fine and all will live happily thereafter."

Describing Lashkari Ram and Kapoor as men with "selective memories and convenient consciences", Misra condemned their attempts to belittle the case and pointed out that only the evidence of Minhas revealed that Tanta was smuggling timber under the protection of political patrons. Ordering the retrial to start on March 1 under the sections quoted by Minhas he directed the case be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation as the state's vigilance and enforcement directors had failed in their duties.

Legal Intervention: It has taken the intervention of the highest court in the state to halt Tanta's winning streak. The high-powered committee (Prevention of Illicit Felling of Trees) headed by Chief Secretary K. Pandya and 11 other senior officers decided at its very first meeting on June 30, 1982 that "contractors indulging in illicit felling be blacklisted so that they are disentitled to get such leases in future." Yet, this provision was never enforced in Tanta's case. Worried about the fast growing smuggling of forest logs, the state Government had also directed district level public prosecutors to serve the maximum punishment to offenders. It is clear that this too was flouted in Tanta's case.

Nor has action been taken against the truck operators in this case. A directive issued by the chief conservator of forests specifically states that "as a deterrent to the truck operators who indulge in carriage of illicit timber, it has been decided that the registration authority may suspend their registration and if necessary route permits." Later on the chief secretary's office also directed all the enforcement agencies to report all such cases to the state transport authorities with recommendations. But till December 1982, no such action had been initiated against Jagdish Thakur and Padam Singh.

Public protest against illicit

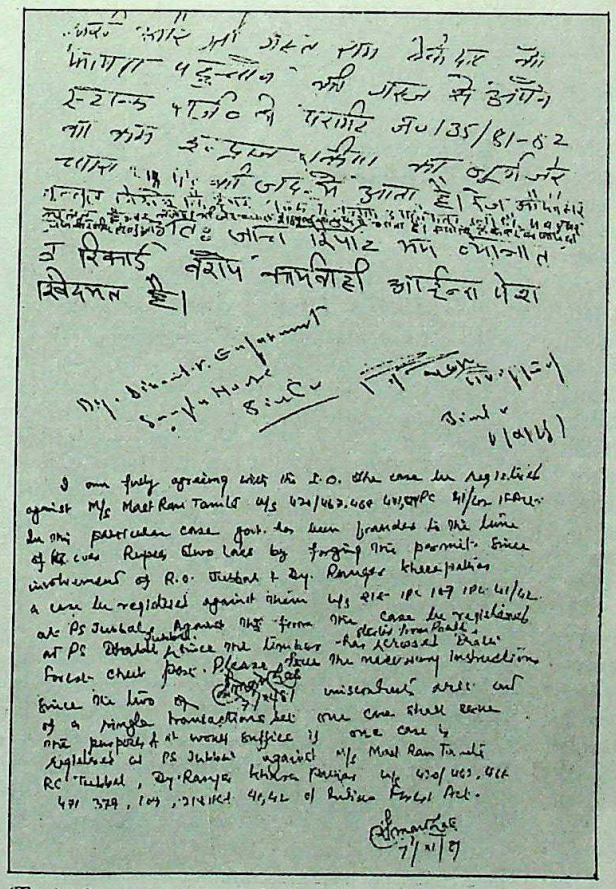


M.J. & Brothers
Forest Lessees
DOCHI (Jubbal)

Ch No. 143
Permit No. 135/3/82
Issued by — Dodrakra
Truck No. HPS 1686
Date 22-4-82
Date of Issue 17-4-81
Date of Expiry 17-7-87
Driver's Name Sh Gian Singh

S. No.	Size	Nag	cft	Remarks
	10x10x5:	50	181-50	
	10x10x4:	15	[illegible]	
	10x8x5:	11	27-50	
	10x8x4:	25	55-50	
	Total	100	306-50	

Freight To Pay Rs. ...
For M.J. & Bros



(Top) the suspect permit issued to Tanta and (above) Minhas's recommendation for Tanta's indictment

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woodcutting and timber smuggling has been growing in the state, and was boosted last June when Raja Veerbhadra Singh, an influential Congress(I) MP from the state took up cudgels on behalf of tree lovers. In a strongly worded letter to the chief minister, Singh wrote: "The big operators who are behind the mass scale theft and felling of trees in an organised manner have eluded detection.... It has also been reported that most of the offenders are being challaned under the Indian Forest Act. It is not known what restrains the checking authorities (from using) the Indian Penal Code...." Singh demanded that wood smugglers be arrested under the National Security Act since, he wrote, the operations were "being masterminded by an influential mafia consisting of some forest contractors, politically influential people and corrupt government officials. I am sure that it is not beyond the capacity of the Government to identify them."

Differing Figures: Singh's forthright indictment of the state Government created commotion in the state secretariat. While it speeded up its enforcement agencies, the state's Enforcement Directorate created in 1981 activated itself after Singh's outburst and during the entire year they notched up 1,485 cases of illicit timber trade involving wood worth Rs 51 lakh. Claims Pandya: "We have been able to create terror amongst the timber smugglers by tightening the noose around them. Within the next two years, we expect to eliminate it completely when forest operations will be nationalised."

But the Opposition leaders and a section of Congress(I) want the establishment of a judicial commission to look into the cases of wood smuggling which is the most lucrative business in the state. Said Shanta Kumar, former chief minister: "Only an independent judicial set-up can ensure our hills from being denuded by the politically connected avaricious timber smugglers. Everything else will be just an eyewash and will be subject to administrative pressures."

While the unofficial estimates put timber smuggling at over Rs 200 crore during the last year alone, officials aver that it is only about Rs 10 crore. The divergence in figures is hardly surprising considering the state's outmoded method of assessing the tree count which takes place every 10 or 15 years. Says V.K. Sharma, the state chief conservator of forests: "On an average, enunciation of trees takes place after 10 to 15 years when we receive the new plans for each forest division." Of the 23 forest divisions, the enunciation in 15 has not yet taken place since 1975. With a massive wealth of 8 crore cubic metres of wood worth over Rs 3,500 crore, the state is a paradise for wood smugglers. This has not been Ram Lal's first brush with the high court. In a judgement in November the admission of some students to the state's professional colleges had been declared illegal. All these students had been admitted on the chief minister's quota in preference to students with higher marks.

In their judgement Misra and Justice H.S. Thakur struck down Lal's nominations of Kavinder Lal, son of Simla's Deputy Commissioner Mohinder Lal, Pravin Rai, son of Dr Ranji Rai, a sen scientist of National Physical Laborato Delhi and relative of Union Deputy Min ter for Parliamentary Affairs Kalpn Rai who was AICC(I) general secretary, charge of Himachal Pradesh dur 1981–82, and Hirak Dasgupta son of H.K. Dass, professor of medicine Himachal Pradesh Medical College, Sim They were selected by the chief minis out of 98 aspiring nominees even thou none had been able to compete succ fully in the pre-medical tests. Ram L reason for nominating them: their par had done good social work and the ca dates' educational qualifications related a different syllabus than that needed the medical entrance exams.

It was no coincidence, of course, t the candidates were well connected. judges took serious objection to the thod of selecting only influential peo For example, Trilok Chand, son o driver of the Himachal Pradesh Pu Works Department, secured nine ma more than both Kavinder and Dasgupta pre-medical test but was not nominated the chief minister. In fact, of the 98 ap cants more than 60 could have presen

Misra: knocking the establishment

JUSTICE MISRA

Crusader On The Bench

HE HAS become a household name. For the state's 45 lakh population, Chief Justice Vyas Dev Misra, 61, of Himachal Pradesh High Court is currently something of a crusader who can be approached for the redressal of grievances emanating from administrative injustice. Already, since the beginning of this year, three of his judgements have inflicted a grievous blow to the state Government, leading to growing demands from within the ruling Congress(I) and the Opposition for the resignation of Chief Minister Ram Lal's Government. Says Madan Gopal Chitkara, former advocate-general of the state: "Misra has restored confidence of the people in the independence of the judiciary. Now even a beggar can seek justice from the high court if he is a victim of administrative tyranny."

Misra has side-stepped convention in more ways than this. He has been knocking the establishment irrespective of its political complexion. Though h began his legal career as one of Delh Administration's public prosecutors i late '60s, his command of criminal law brought prominence and he was ap pointed as judge of the Delhi High Court in 1970. While in Delhi, Misra shot into the limelight when he got two Delhi policemen suspended for harass ing a couple who were strolling on the India Gate lawns. Later on, during the Emergency, he restored many rights to the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) and Defence of India Rules (DIR) detenus. It was after Misra's or ders that political prisoners were given many facilities like the right to have their own food and weekly meeting with their relatives. In another judge ment, he allowed detained students to write their examinations despite oppo sition from the authorities.

What has broken new ground in the hill state has been Misra's decision to accept anonymous complaints and take the initiative on the basis of infor mation given to him. Misra caught the public eye soon after he joined the Himachal Pradesh High Court in December 1979 as its chief justice. According to Simla Bar Association sources, he was deeply concerned about the various crimes and violations of Constitutional provisions which

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r academic and social reasons for nominated.

f that weren't enough, soon after- Misra took the Simla Municipal Cor- ion to task when a citizen complain- out the poor public health facilities. the most important decision came a after the Tanta retrial was announced. and a colleague. B.P. Gupta, in an to enforce existing laws ordered the of all liquor shops within 200 of places of worship and education, tals, labour and Harijan colonies, in- al and irrigation projects and nation- ghways.

Said the judgement: "The State does deny that the defaulting vends are ed at places where they should not cording to the declared policy of the But their location is justified in the interest of government revenue as cise revenue is also a major source come to (the state)." If that bit of ity wasn't enough, the court obser- hat the "vends have not been granted rtificate by the deputy commissioner he district education officer" giving exemption from the regulations. It on to castigate the Government for having "allowed the vends to... display liquor bottles in the show windows".

This case too emerged from a letter received by the court purporting to be from the residents of Simla. The letter complained that liquor shops had been set up in Simla and other parts of the state in violation of government policy. Said the letter: "In the past few years numerous instances of shop breaking, window smashing, incidents of students fighting under the influence of liquor, eve-teasing, destroying the calm atmosphere at Simla and making movement of citizens as also visitors (difficult) in Simla after sunset are numerous which the authorities refuse to take notice (of)."

After investigation, the court found that "a very great majority of liquor vends are within 200 yards from educational institutions, places of worship, hospitals, and defined labour and Harijan colonies". Criticising the Government in no uncertain terms, the judgement said: "The state cannot take shelter under the plea that the matter is between it and the owners of the vends," nor can it "throw its policy to the winds and shut its eyes to the licencees committing flagrant violation of the terms of the licenses." Noting that the state has one of the highest rates of motor accidents in the country and that the highways are dotted with liquor vends, the court said: "It is intriguing indeed to find the state conniving at the breach of its own rules. It seems that the lust for money has overclouded all reason."

"It is intriguing indeed to find the state conniving at the breach of its own rules. It seems that the lust for money has overclouded all reason."

The decision, which came a day before the court's winter vacation, brought the shutters down on most of the state's liquor shops and had the powerful liquor lobby up in arms. In an effort to save the Rs 7 crore revenue and to appease the liquor barons, the chief minister called an emergency meeting of the Cabinet which recommended the amending of the Excise Act to Governor A.N. Banerjee. In an unprecendented move, the governor sent the recommendation back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

The Government responded by issuing an ordinance which restrained the application of clauses 77 and 78 of the state's excise act which specify the restrictions on the location of liquor vends. The move surprised few, for liquor vends are in the hands of politically well connected individuals. One owner of four liquor shops is related to an office-bearer of the state Pradesh Congress Committee(I). An office-bearer of the Simla District Congress Committee (Urban) owns a shop leased out to a liquor licensee. Two relatives of a local Congress(I) leader hold ownership rights to over half a dozen vends in the state capital. Not unexpectedly, a small number of businessmen have also garnered a disproportionate share of the liquor vends. One such entrepreneur has six vends in his own name and another five in a syndicate with seven others. The scale of operations can be judged from the fact that the highest bids for shops have been in excess of Rs 11 lakh.

Another legal battle which will have a bearing on the state's politics is the case of allotment of rate contract by the Controller of Stores, Department of Industries,

me to his notice while sauntering wn Simla's fashionable Mall Road. sra's daily walks without an armed dyguard brought to his notice the ays in the delivery of justice, ram- nt corruption at the lower rungs of judiciary and the fear which had pped the state's citizens.

Good Example: The most out- nding example of Misra's concern public litigation was his judgement a case relating to Simla's municipal irs. While the streets, roads and er public places were stinking with h and garbage, the administration ntinued to charge municipal taxes m the people. Misra opined that if nicipal authorities could not ensure cleanliness of the city, they had no eral right to collect the taxes. He dir- ed the civil administration to pro- e all civic amenities. Last fortnight, r 200 employees were giving a face- to the tourist city in pursuance of sra's directive.

Besides encouraging public liti- ion, Misra has been able to enforce independence of judiciary and build its clean image. For example, he re- ed to implement an accord which ief Minister Ram Lal had signed h striking non-gazetted officers in l. Misra resolutely maintained that Government had no right to impose its decisions on the judiciary. Consequently, all the employees of the state's judiciary faced disciplinary action for strike participation, while others were given certain concessions and let off.

To improve the sullied image of the judiciary, Misra created a flutter in the state's judicial ranks when he ordered the compulsory retirement of a district judge and three other junior judges of the state because they allegedly "lacked integrity".

At his own headquarters, Misra has introduced many reforms which have substantially eliminated delays and corruption. For example, ligitants could not earlier secure certified copies of the court's documents for weeks and there were delays in the disposal of cases. Following Misra's orders, each applicant will be delivered all the papers the same day. With the disposal of pending cases up by more than 15 per cent during the last two years, the number of pending cases have come down by over 8 per cent according to the bar association. Said Chitkara confidently: "Given the chance, Misra can prove an asset for bringing about the necessary judicial reforms in the country."

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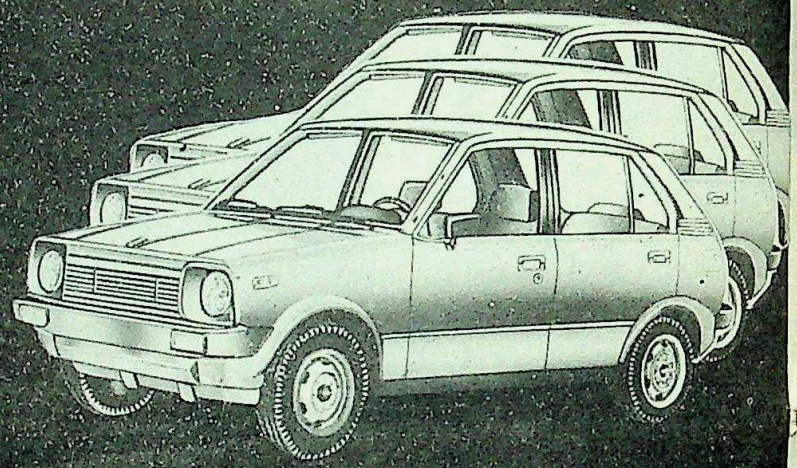

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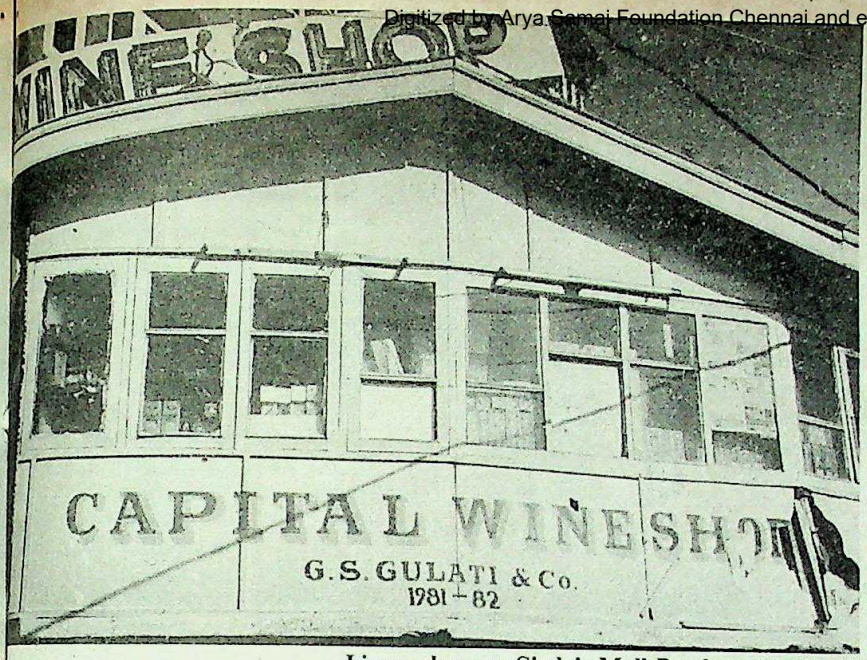

Liquor shops on Simla's Mall Road: political patronage?

hal Government to four local rein- concrete (RCC) pipe manufacturers, f whom are politically well connec- n a writ petition filed in the Hima- radesh High Court, a Chandigarh- firm, Precto Engineers has challen- e Government orders on the plea ough the tender was the lowest, four nits have been given rates more 00 per cent higher. Of the four, Industries in Rohru is owned by al's son-in-law, Padam Singh and recto in Parwanoo by Harsh Maha- n of a state minister Des Raj Maha- o died three months ago. Precto's Virinder Sharma has alleged that cerns to whom rate contract were ely awarded "are influential firms" at Dass Industries were chosen even they had not submitted any tender re not producing RCC pipes at the When Precto went to court, the hal Pradesh Government passed a onal order to buy only from local acturers till the court decided the

September 15, 1982, the Himachal ment again invited tenders for the of RCC pipes. Though the last date mitting tenders was fixed for Octo- 1982, it was cancelled, Precto alle- October 7, 1982, and on October controller of stores issued a letter Himachal firms including those by Mahajan and Padam Singh them to sign the rate contract for pply of RCC pipes to the various ment agencies on the basis of ten- en by them in January 1981. en then Dass Industries was not in production but was selected on the basis of a policy by which a new local unit could be chosen to supply after production on the same rate as other existing local suppliers. Precto, however, alleges in its petition that even this has been violated. For example, in one instance, Precto offered 450 mm pipes for Rs 46.00 per piece as against Rs 71.43 quoted by local manufacturers. Yet the Government approved a still higher rate of Rs 90 per pipe after conceding the local firm's request that cement prices had doubled between the date of tender and the final decision. Similarly, in case of 1,200 mm RCC pipes, Precto rates were Rs 240 as against local rates of Rs 470 and the Government has accepted many of the points but it has maintained that no rules and regulations were violated.

The Government, in its reply, argued that Precto "tried to oust every local unit in Himachal Pradesh by giving uneconomical tenders so that he may gain monopoly in future by seeing those local units closed and as such he deliberately gave tenders which were not commercially viable or profitable but would have entailed huge losses...." It went on to say that the local units had shown that Precto's rates were "not workable".

The state Government allows local suppliers a 17.5 per cent price advantage but these price differences greatly exceed that modest margin. Since about Rs 2 crore worth of pipes are ordered annually, the money involved is clearly no trifling matter.

The Opposition and dissident Congress(I) members have lost no time in making political capital of Ram Lal's troubles. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which with 27 members forms the largest opposition group in the 68-member Assembly, plans to mount a public campaign to make "the corrupt chief minister quit". Said Himachal Pradesh's sole independent MLA, Vijay Singh: "We have made it clear that this Antulay of Himachal Pradesh must go or face state-wide agitation."

In an effort to safeguard his position Ram Lal has got 27 of the 33 Congress(I) MLA's to sign a statement saying that the judgement indicts Tanta alone, but a senior minister admitted privately: "He must have weathered many storms but let us see how he weathers this blizzard." Copies of the judgement have already been dispatched to the prime minister by the state unit and detailed memoranda are under preparation. While the two Janata members will probably go along with the BJP, the Congress(I) MLA's, with their three-seat majority by last fortnight, seemed willing to settle for a change in leadership.

In spite of the series of adverse judgements, dissident trouble and threats from the Opposition, the chief minister seems to have taken the judgement very lightly. Referring to it, he said jauntily: "The judgement is not against my kin, and Tanta is not my relative." But with BJP leader and former chief minister Shanta Kumar alleging, in the Assembly and outside, that racketeering in timber could be anything between Rs 10 crore and Rs 20 crore and calling for high-level probe, it will be a long-time before Ram Lal is out of the woods.

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SCHOOLS

Warning Signals

IS TOO much work and too little play making Ramu a dull boy? Yes, answers a recent study of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) which looked into the curriculum load of secondary school children in Delhi, Maharashtra, Haryana and Kerala. The report, which will obviously have a wider interest, has yet to be made public although it was finished several weeks ago. But its findings are startling and confirm the gut feelings of millions of parents and children that teenagers are simply being pushed too hard in the pursuit of good grades at the expense of all-round education and character building.

"Our educational system is guided, controlled and directed by the examination system" to such an extent, the NCERT report argues, that the energy of teachers is single-mindedly aimed at enabling students to pass examinations and, if possible, get good marks. There are "a number of social forces which are operating to generate and sustain the mass hysteria concerning percentage of marks obtained, merit lists, top positions, etc. A teacher's efficiency is judged in terms of pass percentages shown by his students in the annual examination. In order to show good results, the principals and teachers are unable to resist the temptation of utilising periods allocated to non-examination subjects for the teaching of examination subjects."

The report hits a raw nerve, for it speaks about ominous trends in secondary school education with the authority of the country's apex educational body. Authored by three NCERT educationists, G.L. Arora, B.P. Gupta and Madhulika, the report makes a series of telling points. Among them:

► School curricula are so overloaded that teachers are totally unable to complete them in school hours. In Maharashtra, fewer than 20 per cent of the teachers admitted to being able to finish prescribed courses on time. In Kerala, the number was at 30 per cent, while Delhi and Haryana were relatively better off at 50 per cent.

► In Kerala and Maharashtra, between 50 and 90 per cent—depending on subject—of the teachers felt that the time allotted to school courses was too little, and two-thirds of the teachers interviewed were obliged to take extra classes to complete the prescribed curricula. Surprisingly, in all four states a substantial number of teachers confessed to being unprofessional in their approach: they either rushed through the courses or left out parts of them altogether.

► In many schools visited by the NCERT researchers, school periods allotted for health and physical education, and socially useful productive work were actually being utilised in the teaching of English, science and mathematics.

► With school work being handled so inadequately, children were found to be overloaded with homework. In class IX, for example, children were found on an average to be spending four hours on their homework after a school day of five to six hours compared with an accepted optimum of 90 minutes.

► Not surprisingly, homework was found to be eating into leisure time which, education authorities the world over agree, is vital to balanced personality development. A staggering 82.6 per cent of c dren interviewed in Maharashtra felt t had to curtail play hours in order to homework. Delhi was only slightly be with 60.25 per cent while in Haryana 47 and Kerala 37.50 per cent children they had insufficient play hours becaus home-work.

► Astonishingly, a large number of chers interviewed admitted that homew was not merely revision of courses rea class; children were being asked to c prehend new material entirely on t own or, as teachers confessed, "with help of parents or private tutors".

The ultimate comment on the na of secondary education in the cou comes from the finding that teac placed pushing children through exam tions and good marks their first priority. Teacher Maharashtra and Haryana that the primary purpos education is to get studen pass examinations while D and Kerala teachers felt top priority was for chil to acquire the maxi possible knowledge in subjects. Without excep all categories of teacher the four states put the nee develop a child's mental ties and to develop de personality traits at bottom of the list of prior

While NCERT's find may come as a surpris ivory tower educationists, will hardly be news to cerned school-teachers and rents who have over the seen the school educ system being warped in mass production line of s leavers who pass a lo exams but understand little. Nor is this the first that warning signals gone up (INDIA TODAY, December 1980). The NCERT's own syllabus guid of 1975 and the recommendations Ishwarbhai J. Patel review committ 1977 have fallen by the wayside. The committee stressed the distortion that crept into the education system becau the obsession with literacy and learning. To correct this imbalance committee recommended that so useful productive work must find a ce place in the school curriculum and su ted deletions from large parts of school syllabus.

Unheeded Advice: Only a few o Patel committee recommendations

HARI OM GULATI

In class IX, children were found spending on an average four hours on their homework after school, compared with an accepted optimum of 90 minutes.

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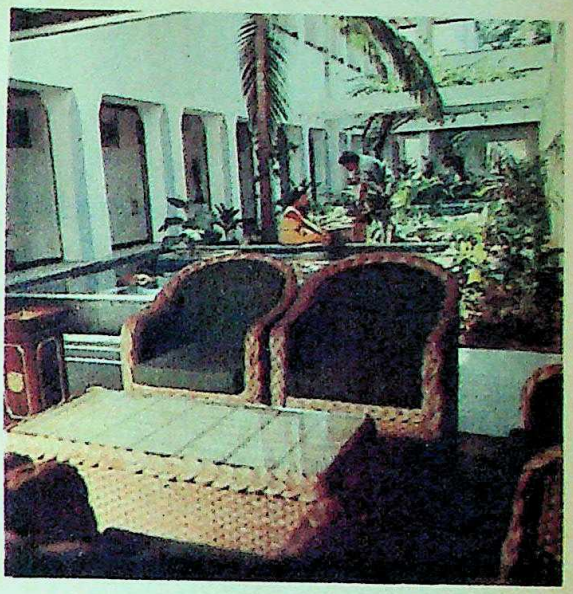

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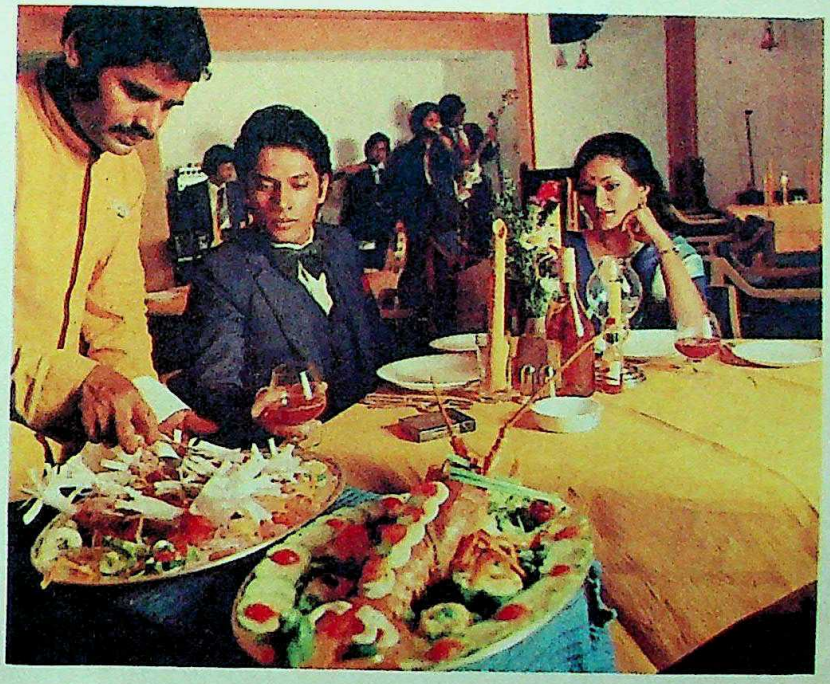

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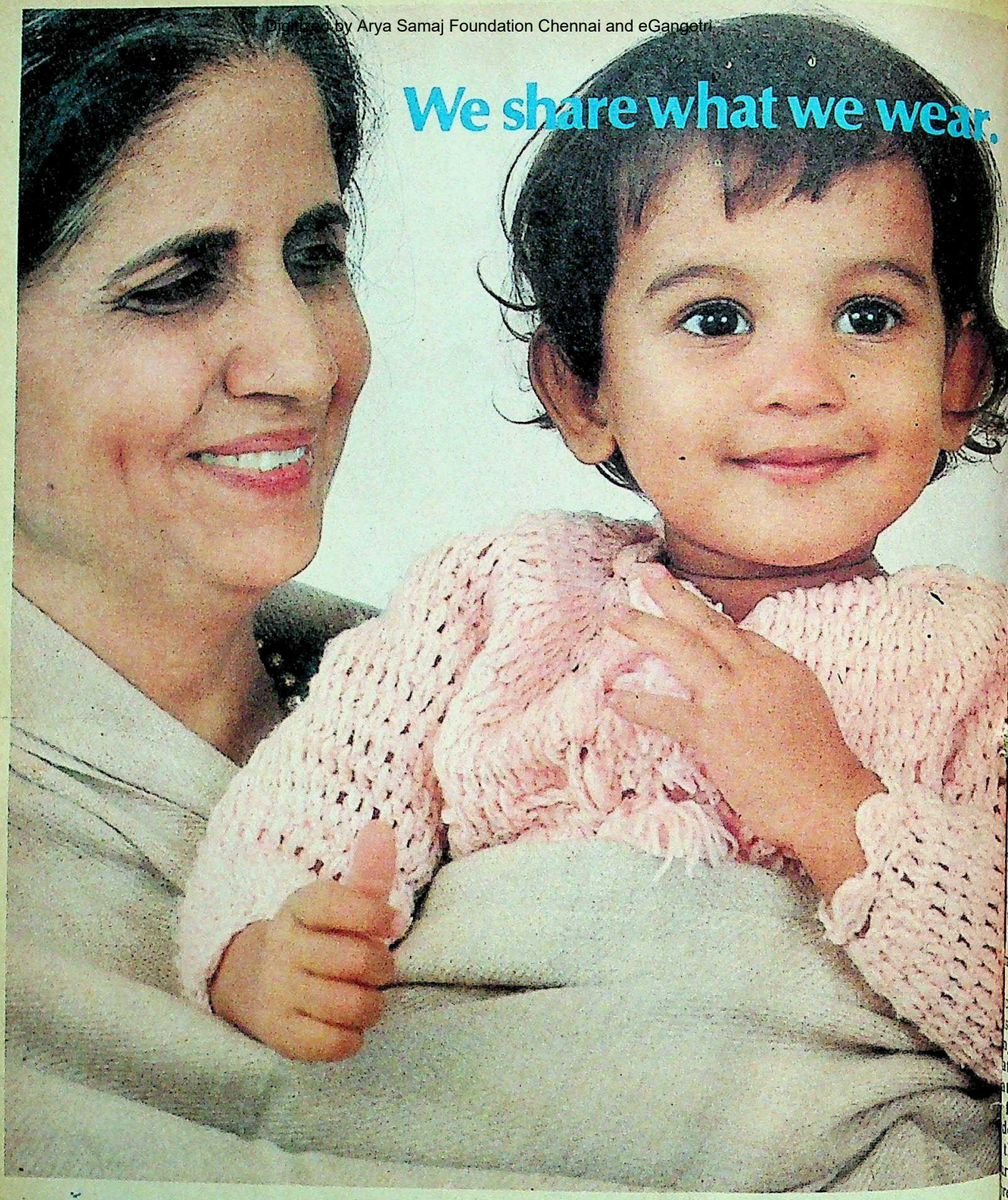

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y been put to effect—and that too en manner. There was opposition traditional educationists and teachers elt, for example, that giving more social work would reduce time al- o exam-related subjects. Others felt e entire curriculum load should be ined, giving rise to the new NCERT One suggestion of the earlier com- hanging fire—even, ironically, in where members of the Patel com- are in responsible positions—was to te homework completely till class n the child is around 10 years, and textbooks to just two subjects, natics and language teaching, till . "The rat race for children now in nursery," says one irate parent.

he whole issue of curriculum load complicated one," affirms T.V. kal, chairman of the Central of Secondary Education (CBSE). "It be solved by patchwork reform." kal, who has not yet seen a copy NCERT report, goes on to argue that education is a state subject, the can only recommend but not act. nowledges that the board has a rationalising the "donkey's load" bear and that exam questions seek out a child's grasp on a not what he has learned by rote.

e irrelevance of the marks system ild's knowledge was borne out by riment last year at a seminar where ading educationists were asked to Bachelor of Commerce exami- With a maximum of 20 marks, the were marked up in the range five The examiners were then asked to the same answers in an 'A' to 'D' based not on points but overall of the answers. The result: a 'C' grade for most of them. It is surprising that the country's us Indian Institutes of Technology continued their earlier practice of g toppers from state board ations without an entrance ation.

few years ago a World Bank described Indian school syllabi as the most top-heavy in the world. rricula were much longer than rescribed in North American and n schools. On the other hand, a of British educationists invited to ia by the (CBSE) found the grasp of over subjects studied by them to ior to their counterparts in Britain. esson from findings such as and the NCERT—continues sadly st on those who hold the education n children in their hands.

—COOMI KAPOOR

A procession in Nagpur against the history book: belated reaction

MAHARASHTRA

A Textbook Case

CONSIDERING its scope, the militant morchas and protest processions being taken out all over Maharashtra could easily have something to do with the textile strike. But the much ado in the state is all because of an innocuous-looking history textbook prescribed for class VIII students. Produced and published by the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Education, the book was first introduced into the curriculum in 1976. In a belated awakening, leaders of two communities, Muslims and Christians, have raised serious objections to the contents of two chapters—on Christianity and Islam—and triggered off a state-wide controversy with members of the two communities up in arms.

In parts of the state, the book has been taken out in processions and ceremoniously burnt. Following the protest, Chief Minister Babasaheb Bhosale sought the easy way out by ordering that the two chapters be dropped from the curriculum. But the measure proved short-lived. Last fortnight, the controversy flared up again with the Maharashtra History Teachers Federation (MHTF) declaring their intention to continue teaching the two chapters on the grounds that the Government's decision to drop them was "arbitrary".

The 94-page history textbook with its two controversial chapters—"The Rise of Christianity" and "The Rise of Islam"—is the creation of three writers, none of whom is Christian or Muslim. However, the foreword to the book states that the draft was sent to scholars and experienced history teachers for their consent and approval. Says P.T. Mahajan, chairman of the board and author of the foreword: "To see that the book was free from any blemish, it was even taught in selected schools on an experimental basis. And the views of teachers and the students were also sought." But this was apparently not sufficient for complaints about religious prejudices in the book have been coming in.

Religious Objections: The major objections of the two communities are "derogatory" references to their respective religions. Muslim leaders have taken offence to the absence of the prefix "Hazrat" before the prophet's name, even though the suffix "Sahib" has been used. Also, they feel that Marathi translations of "Hijrat" (the prophet's passage from Mecca to Medina) into "Palayan" (escape) is derogatory. The book also mentions that there are various sects in Islam. Kaneez Fatima, a history teacher at the Urdu-medium National High School, Nagpur, argues that this is misleading since "the fundamental tenet of Islam is that it is one". There are other objections about religious and historical inaccuracies.

When the Government ordered corrections in the textbook after protests from Muslim leaders, Christian leaders felt it was time for them to publicly voice their

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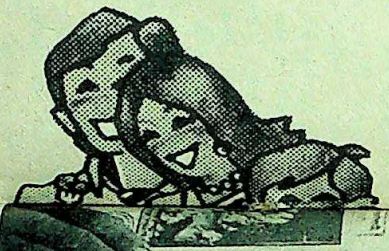

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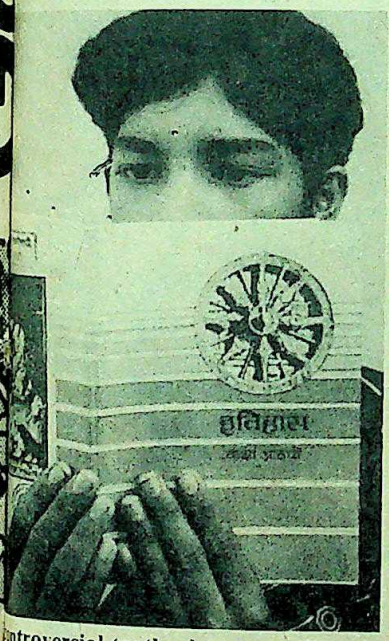
ions too. In his letter to the chief er, Leonard Desouza, archbishop of ur, listed six major objections, two of are against specific passages. One hat Christ "claimed no divinity. He forbade his disciples from saying that is an incarnation of God" and the says: "The religion as preached by came to be very different from the reached by Christ."

"The book is a disaster," says Father Corriea-Afonso, director, Haras tte of Indian History and Culture. "One cannot expect a textbook to go he finer points of theology and histo- t precisely because it is a school text- it has to be careful about making ca- al statements on complex issues," ys. Father Maurice Fernandes and



ntroversial textbook: target of wrath

Ivan Lobo of a missionary school gpur, feel that the book has confused uman element with the divine". In se to the argument that people like arlal Nehru and H.G. Wells believed at has been presented in the book, Lobo says that, at best, it should ated as their personal views rather aught to students as historical facts.

nfavourable Picture: Christians have esented the book's presentation of rker side of the spread of Christiani- ays Corriea-Afonso: "The book ins a discreet silence about the inva- of India by Ghazni, Ghori and . But there are no scruples about the usual allegations about forced sions by Christian missionaries." disapproves of the title "Mrityu (death penalty) under the picture of Christ on the cross. He feels that the title will cause children to think that Christ was a criminal who was punished. There are several such objectionable statements throughout the chapter.

Fearing the displeasure of the two communities, Bhosale ordered the correction of all references which they found derogatory. But when this failed to cool the agitators, he ordered that the two chapters be dropped and incurred the wrath of the MHTF and opposition leaders, who felt that he had given in to the religious leaders. "The Government has yielded to the irrational demands without even consulting the State Board for Textbooks and so a protest (by the teachers) is necessary," says G.M. Pande, a history teacher at Bharat High School, Nagpur. In fact, the matter was brought up by prominent opposition leaders T.N. Mahtade, D.K. Deshmukh and Sadanand Varde (former education minister) during the winter session of the Maharashtra Legislature at Nagpur. Finally, Bhosale came to the help of state Education Minister Baliran Hiray and gave a categorical assurance that the Government was ready to discuss and reconsider the whole textbook issue with opposition leaders.

There have also been other complaints about the same book. Sharafuddin Sarraf, MP (National Conference) from Kashmir took objection to some lines in a poem—*Sarva Dharma Sambhava* (secularism) by Sant Tukadoji Maharaj, a well-known Maharashtrian saint. But suggestions of dropping this poem met with opposition from other Marathi poets and politicians. Mahtade and Deshmukh went to the extent of threatening that "if even a comma is removed from that poem" there would be "trouble all over Maharashtra". Bhosale immediately declared that the poem was to be retained as it was.

The next target of criticism was the Urdu edition of the same textbook. Professor Ganesh Pradhan, Janata Party leader, inquired: "Why is India that is Bharat translated as 'Hindausta'? Since when has the Government started translating even proper nouns?" Hiray, already tired of the criticism against the tiny textbook, confessed that the Urdu edition has as many as 114 errors. And he has assured that the book will be dropped next term.

As the two minority communities join forces to bring out morchas in protest against the book, dropping it seems almost inevitable as the basically academic issue acquires an increasingly religious and political overtone.

—NIRMALA CHINU PANCHAL

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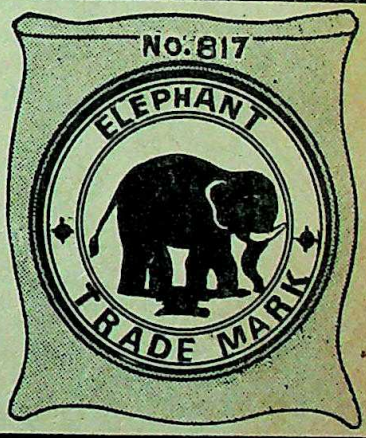

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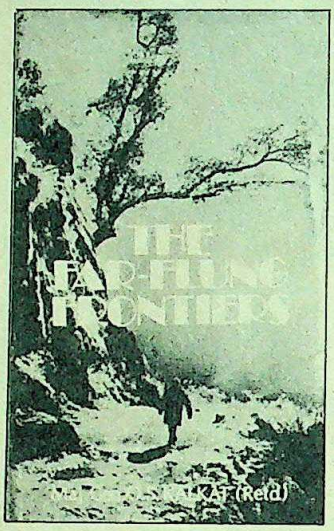
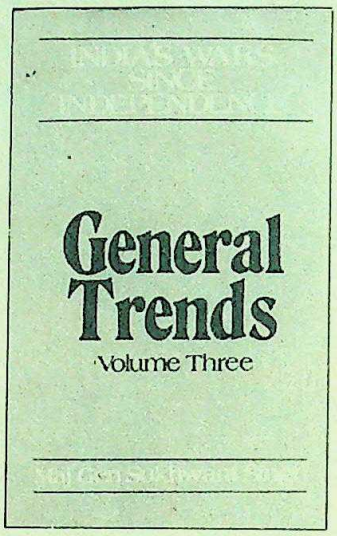
MEMOIRS

Barrack Room Bonanza

BATTLEFIELDS and barrack rooms have probably spawned more books than any other comparable source of literary material in the non-fiction genre. Paradoxically, considering the size of India's defence forces and the number of wars they have participated in, our generals and admirals have been remarkably reluctant to put their memories permanently between hard covers.





There are, of course, valid reasons for this. One is the Government's neurotic obsession with keeping embarrassing skeletons securely locked up in the cupboard labelled "Official Secrets Act", decades after the event has been forgotten. And there is no other citizen who plays so much by the official rule book as the service officer, conditioned by his years in uniform. This, coupled with the attitude of the publishing industry which has never really considered the ramblings of retired defence personnel a lucrative enough proposition, has succeeded in keeping the field fairly barren.

New Trend: There was a sporadic attempt to right the imbalance, particularly in the middle '60s when a sort of chain reaction took place with the publication of some books on the disastrous Sino-Indian war of 1962. But the temporary outflow was clearly a motivated one with various senior officers defending themselves from charges made in another book, and generally passing the buck for the debacle to someone else. Despite the confused and contradictory picture of the conflict that finally emerged, it did succeed in setting a trend.

Of late, it has almost become *de rigueur* for almost every service chief and other top brass to come out with an autobiographical account of their careers—and the addiction seems to be spreading. Of the 20-odd works of non-fiction in English that have been released in the past few months, no less than four are the reminiscences of retired defence officers, and they happen to be in keeping with the size and traditional seniority of the service arm they represent. Three are by army officers, while the fourth is by the first Indian chief of the navy, Admiral R.D. Katari, who passed away last fortnight in Hyderabad shortly after the book was published.

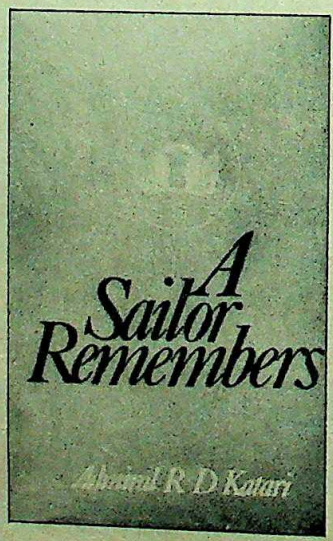
Conforming to precedent, none of the books has much to offer that is new; nor do they contain any startling revelations. But there is undoubtedly a refreshing element of defiance of traditional taboos, as well as a powerful underlay of criticism—usually justified—directed against sacred cows like cabinet ministers, bureaucrats and service chiefs.

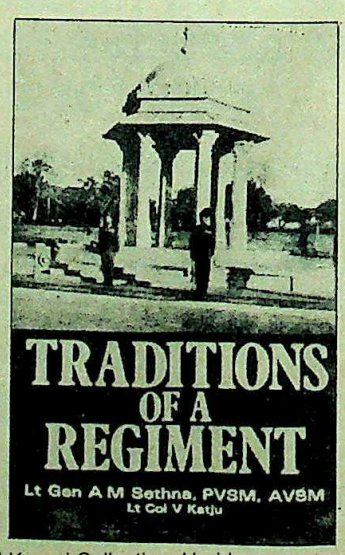
Significant Book: In terms of military value and the scope it covers, the pick of the bunch is *The Far-Flung Frontiers* by Major-General O.S. Kalkat. The General's career covered a broad spectrum, and his role as an infantry battalion commander in the sensitive north-east when the insurgency was at its height renders him eminently qualified to hold forth on a problem that is of even greater relevance today. He was also the man in charge of training the Mukti Bahini during the run-up to the Bangladesh operations and after his retirement did a two-year stint in the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW) as chief military adviser in the Cabinet Secretariat.

Kalkat's book, also, is the only one that contains at least one major revelation that has till now not really been publicised regarding "Operation Gulmarg", the tribal invasion of Kashmir in October 1947 (though the year wrongly appears as 1948 in the book). Kalkat, then brigade major in the erstwhile Bannu Frontier Brigade Group in Pakistan and waiting for the Partition spoils to be divided up, stumbled across a 'top secret' document giving details about the invasion plans, including the date it was to take place.

At great personal risk, Kalkat evaded the strict surveillance he was under and escaped to New Delhi, where he disclosed his findings to Generals Kulwant Singh and Thapar and defence minister Sardar Baldev Singh, three days before Operation Gulmarg was to take place. The three officials and members of the Intelligence Directorate, however, stubbornly refused to believe his story and no efforts were made to counter the threat. Neither was Prime Minister Nehru informed. The rest is tragic history: Operation Gulmarg started exactly as Kalkat had predicted and laid the ground for what is the most intractable bone of contention between the two countries—the Kashmir problem.

Revelation: Kalkat also reveals some interesting details about Nehru's reaction to the blunder when it came to his notice. On October 24, two days after the invasion, Kalkat was sent for by Nehru who asked him to relate the full details





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resence of Baldev Singh and General ar. According to Kalkat's version, u was so enraged at the two for g disbelieved an officer in a responsi- position that he gave vent to his ation and anger by flinging two glass weights at the two gentlemen after ng at them for their blunder!

Kalkat's account charges that the Bri- ere behind Operation Gulmarg with ject of destabilising the country. The cret document he intercepted was by General Frank Messervey, com- er-in-chief of the Pakistan Army and sed to Kalkat's commanding officer, Britisher.

MILITARY types are generally not endowed with great literary talent, and for a layman, Kalkat's loses much in the telling. But for a of this type, the pithy quality of the is effective enough. He has, for ce, some interesting observations to on the problems of counter-insur- strategy in the north-east. In his n, and experience, "Intelligence es are numerous and lack coordina- nd unity of purpose. These are nei- tegrated nor geared to meet our im- e requirements; an unhealthy rival- ts and the agents make money for me information from more than one . Intelligence being the main key to r-insurgency operations, the units of urity forces are faced with the pro- of organising their own intelligence e measure." According to Kalkat, follows should be a "battle of the rather than one of force—an opinion difficult to argue against.

ard-hitting: Likewise, the opinions ed in the second book, *General* (volume three) by Major-General ant Singh fall into much the same y. Sukhwant Singh's trilogy is on wars since Independence, and the lume was published after his death 9. Singh is another officer who has e gamut of military experience, and though there is far too much of repetition in the book, he is far more forceful than Kalkat and pulls no punches in his tirades against the men who ran military affairs in his time.

He is particularly merciless on Krishna Menon and his tenure as defence minister. Though it has been said before, Singh reconfirms the fact that General Thimayya, then army chief, projected a dual threat from China and Pakistan, which Menon dismissed as fantasy. Thimayya also pushed for a replacement of the ageing equipment, (which Menon again ignored in favour of an indigenous production base) in the conviction that there would be wars for India to fight before the production materialised. The author once again emphasises Menon's obsession with eastern bloc weaponry, even though Indian maintenance and repair services were western-oriented.

Critical: He lays much of the blame for the 1962 debacle against the Chinese on the politicking that had by then invaded Army Headquarters, spearheaded by Menon and Lieutenant-General Kaul. As he observes: "a decade of spit and polish and internal politicking in the higher command had sapped the fighting spirit of the army". Singh is, in fact, largely uncomplimentary about the qualities and calibre of the army chiefs during his tenure. Thimayya was "not much of a military brain, but he was certainly a soldier's general"; he dismisses Thapar as "mediocre"; Chaudhuri was "stereotyped" and employed "outmoded military concepts"; Kumaramangalam "was an insipid personality, militarily speaking, with a pronounced lethargic disposition and so wedded to orthodoxy that original thinking was beyond him"; and Bewoor "did not understand the dynamisms of defence". In Singh's opinion, the only chief who had foresight and imagination was Sam Manekshaw; though he admits that Chaudhuri served the army well during his time.

How is it, asks Singh, that we have been unable to find solutions to our military problems for the last 27 years? The reason, in his words, is: "we have not encouraged new thought, and our generals have been busy promoting their own interests rather than those of the nation . . . the military higher command has instilled a sense of insecurity among honest and genuine officers and paved the way for sycophancy to flourish. The moral courage of our officers has been buried deep by the system." Harsh words those—but so is reality. Sukhwant Singh's observations on related matters like logistics, administration, political interference and defence production are also close to the bone, and this is one book that should be required reading for all those in charge of the military establishment.

Career Books: The other two books just released are fairly limited in terms of reader interest. Katari's book, *A Sailor Remembers*, is essentially a readable story of his career in the navy, but of no great historical or military value. He has some judicious points to make on how policy should be formulated but for the most part, it is a straightforward autobiography. But for those interested in a naval career or life at sea it should prove a valuable guide. Also, the fact that Katari was the first Indian naval chief is reason enough to make it a worthwhile exercise.

The last of the quartet is *Traditions of a Regiment* by Lieutenant-General A.M. Sethna, who has just retired as vice-chief of army staff, and Colonel V. Katju, who was his military assistant. The book is essentially a history of the Rajputana Rifles—or Raj Rif as it is better known in army circles—the regiment that both Sethna and Katju belong to. Again, this book is of limited interest except for those interested in military traditions and uniforms. It does offer some insight into the psyche of the jawan as well as the officer and the way the Indian army functions in peace time. But apart from that, *Traditions of a Regiment* is far too expensively priced (Rs 150) to interest the average reader.

—DILIP BOBB

(From left) Thimayya, Thapar, Chaudhuri, Kumaramangalam, Bewoor and Manekshaw: questions of quality

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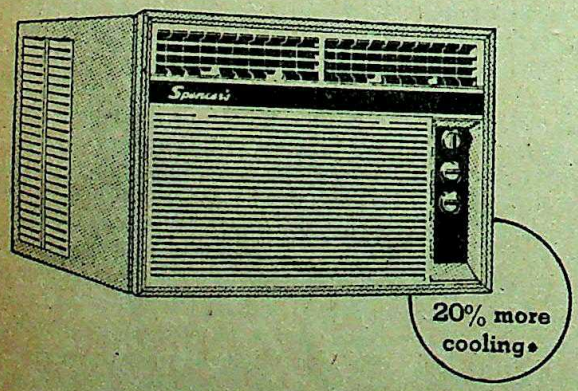

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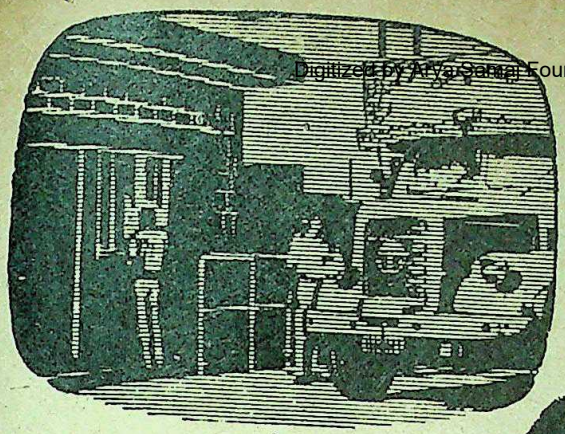

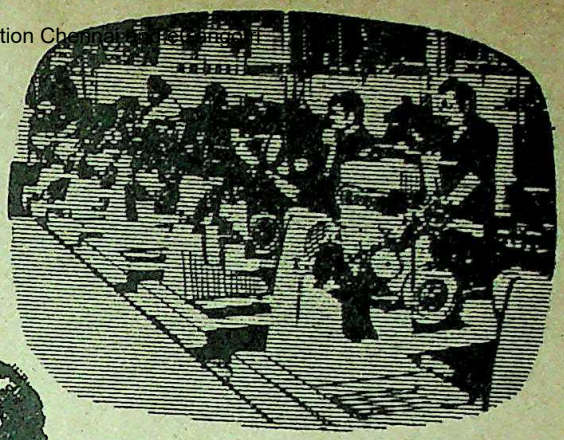

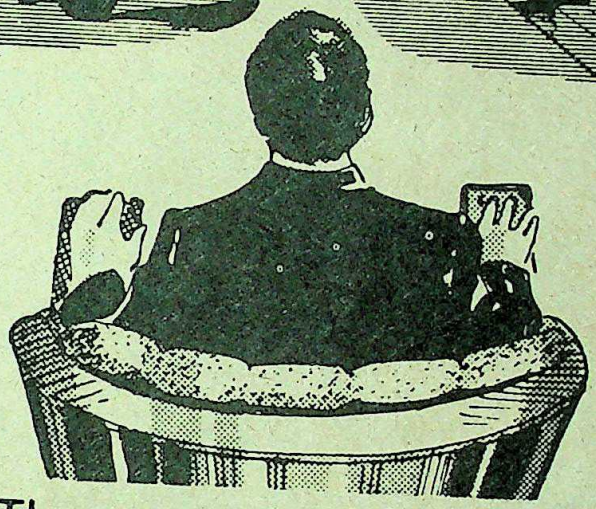

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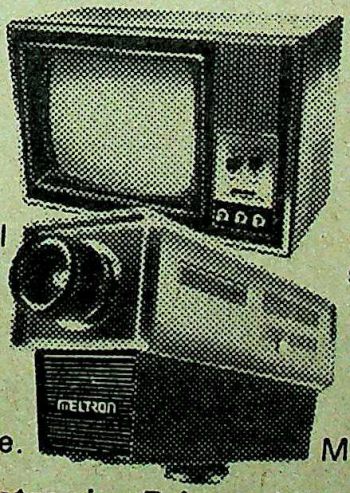

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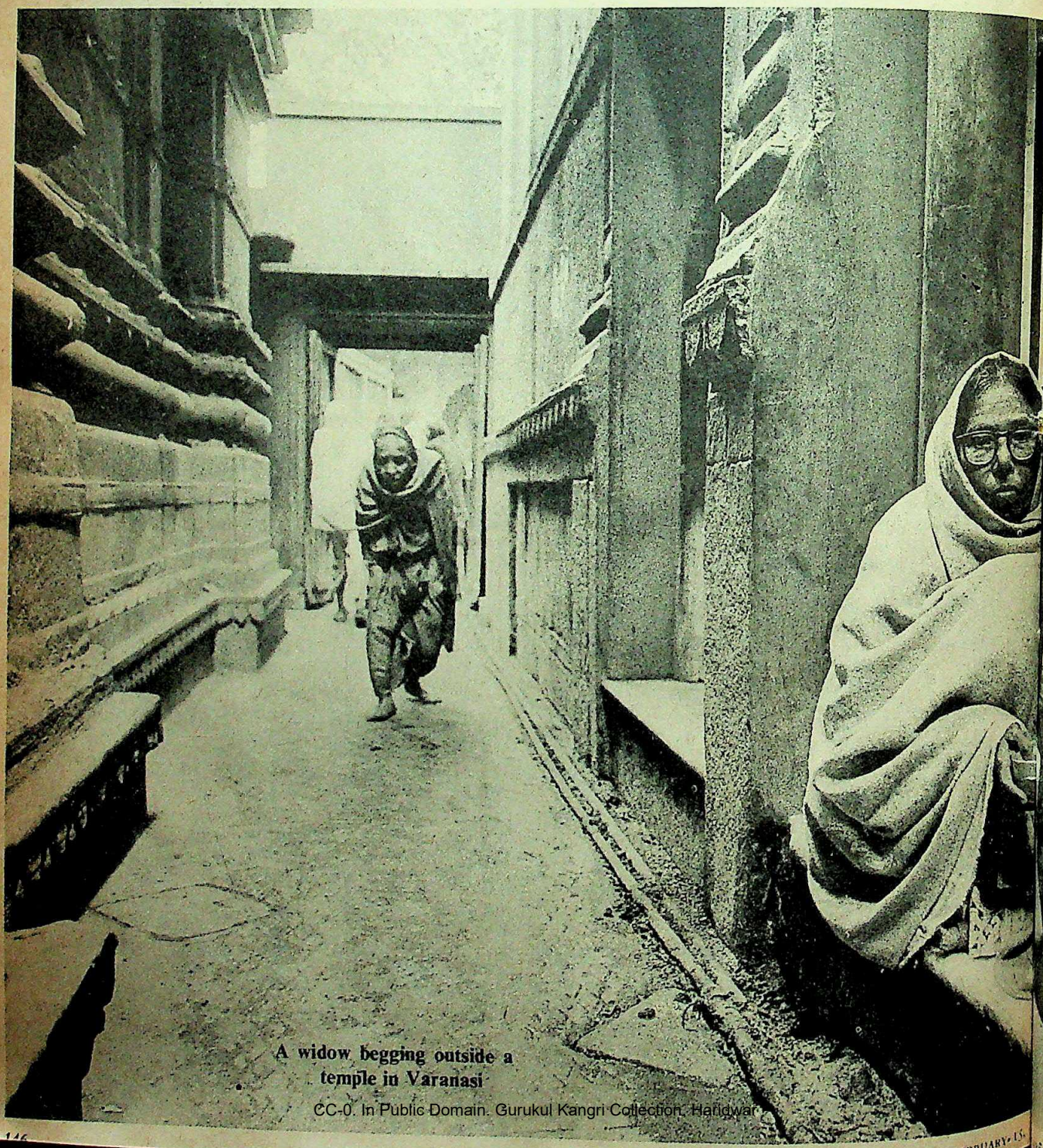
Widows Of Varanasi



A widow begging outside a temple in Varanasi

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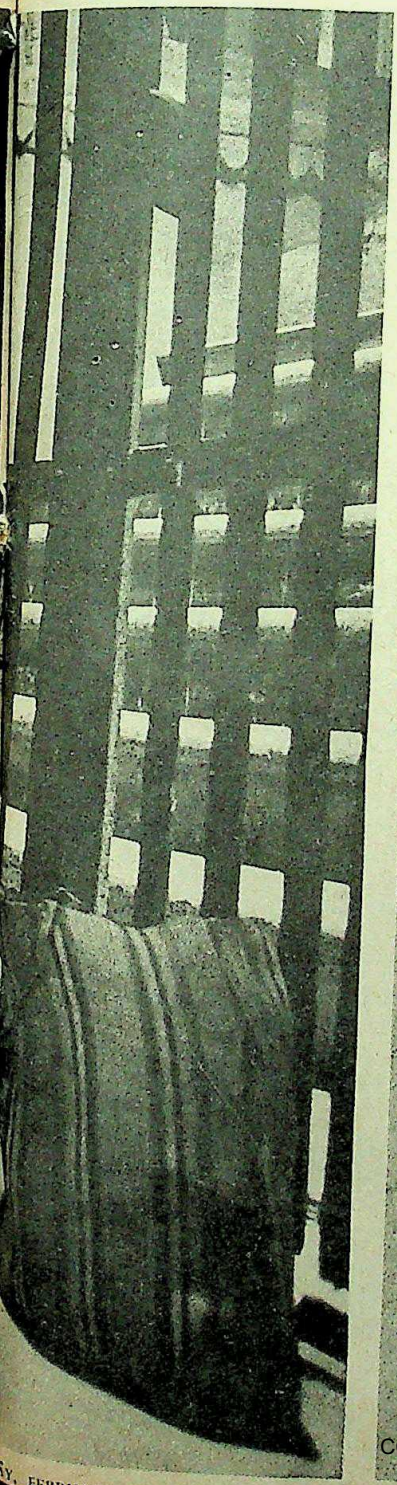
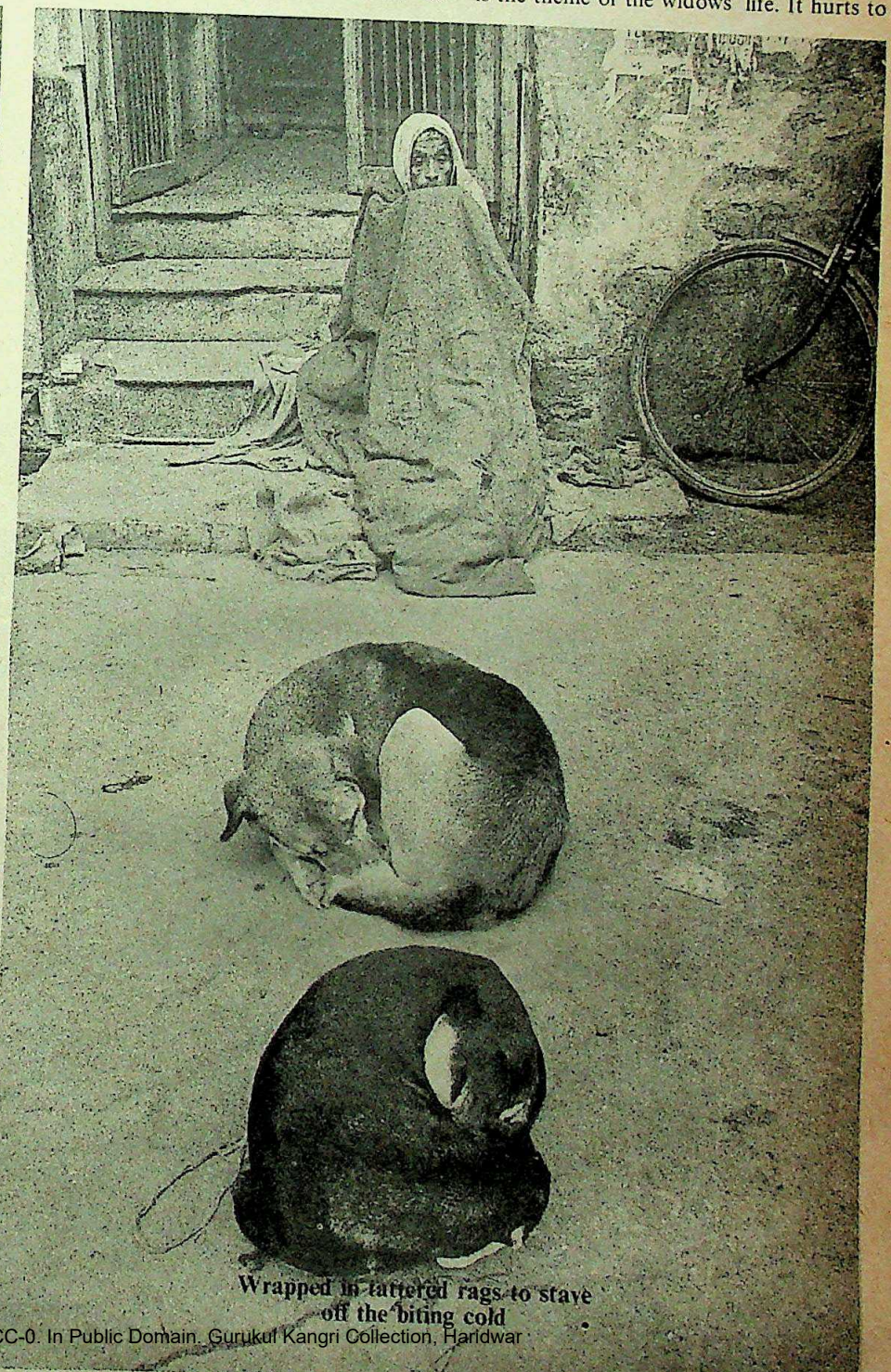
'COME to Kashi and die.' For centuries, devout Hindus have descended on the ancient town on the banks of the swiftly-flowing a to do just that. Here they live out emainder of their lives, firm in the that death in Kashi, or Varanasi, ring them *moksha*: release from the of birth, death and rebirth. For some aiting can be cruel, especially if it es into decades of an inhumanly th- re existence—as it has for 8,000 widows who came to Varanasi a long time ago to look for release, and are still looking for it, in conditions that are a foul blot on the face of society.

All of them, with a few exceptions, came to Varanasi as young widows, driven out of house and home by in-laws blindly obedient to the harsh dictates of the Hindu code—and sometimes greedy for the widow's property. Sarju Chanda, 70, was slightly over 16 when her husband died and his relatives banished her to Varanasi from Barisal in erstwhile East Pakistan, condemning her to a life-time of poverty, hunger and physical suffering. Renu Chakravarty, 65, made the long trek from Dhaka 30 years ago soon after her husband died. Durgadevi, 70, came to Varanasi just after she was widowed at 18, and now ekes out the most meagre of livings by begging; asks Durgadevi: "Is it not humiliating to beg?"

Bare Existence: Humiliation, in fact, is the theme of the widows' life. It hurts to





Wrapped in tattered rags to stave off the biting cold

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beg, to sit for hours on the dirty steps of the Dashaswamedh Ghat, as Chakravarty does, holding out to passers-by a battered aluminium vessel that is one of her few possessions. It hurts to live on the charity of others, as do the 29 widows from Bihar sheltered by the peeling walls of the Bhajana Ashram on Mir Ghat, run by Bihar businessmen; the widows have to sing bhajans all day while one of them feebly beats a drum, otherwise they are shunted out. Says Ramadevi, 80, who came to Varanasi from Darbhanga: "Our life depends on the kindness of others. Once charity stops, we will die."

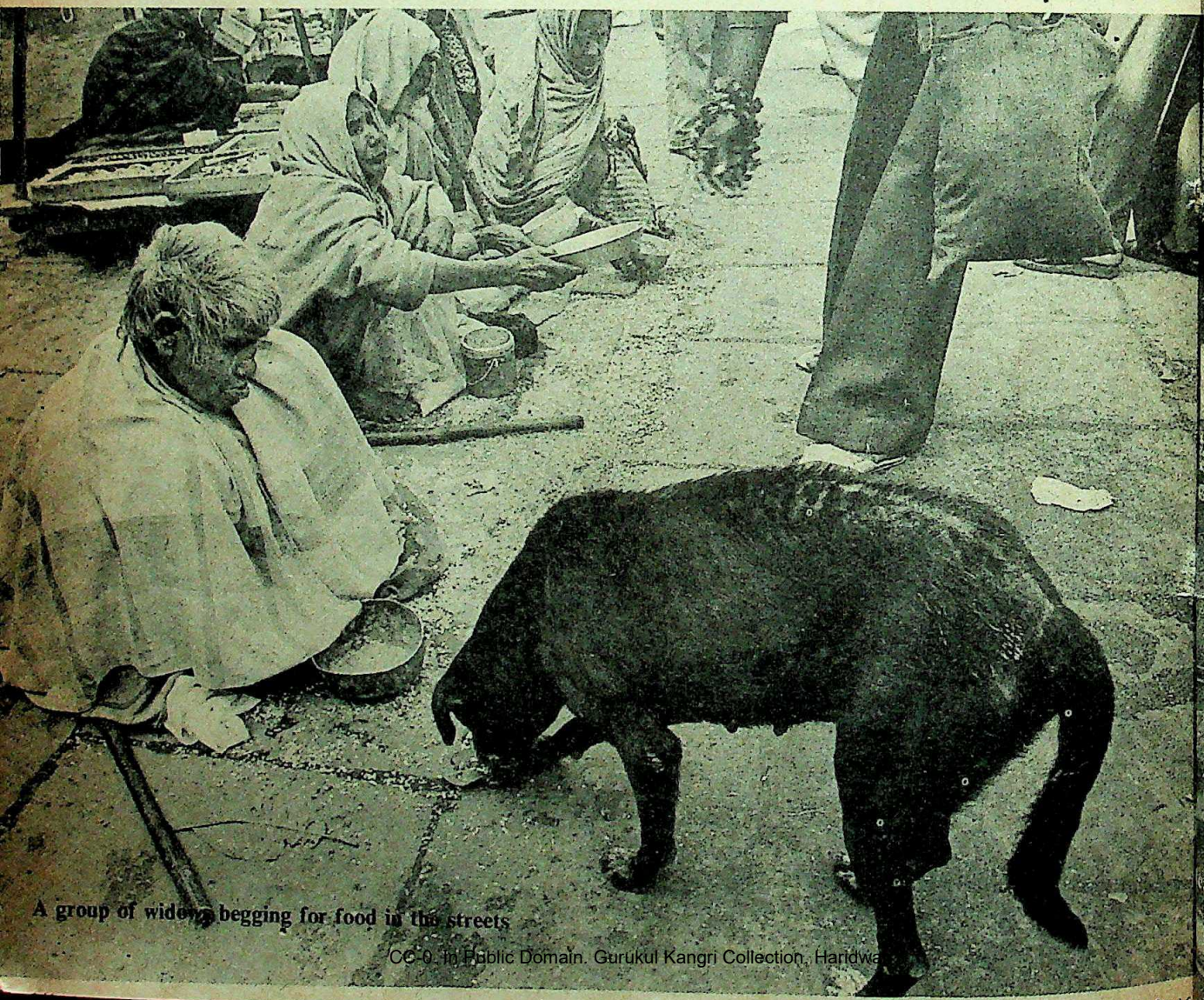
Most wounding of all is that a lot of them have been left to their fate in Varanasi's dirt-stained streets by indifferent sons and daughters. Banumati Biswas, 65, has been in Varanasi for 25 years, and says: "My three sons are businessmen. But times have changed. We cannot depend on our children any more."

The sense of isolation is at its worst on the pavements where a large number of the widows live, and where last fortnight they were shivering uncontrollably in the biting cold, wrapped in plastic sheets and newspapers. One of them was Adanubathi, 81, formerly of Udai village in Bihar, who has been living on Varanasi's pavements for 40 years; says she: "My only desire is to die soon. I have suffered too much." Others are luckier and live in tumbledown hovels with soot-filled roofs, dank walls and foul air, like Rameshwari Devi, 78, who can hardly walk and came to the town 40 years ago.

THE WIDOWS display a touching faith in routine, which most follow rigorously even though their health is failing. In the early morning, they take a dip in the Ganga, braving the chill in the air. Then they perform *pooja*, do the round of the temples in their locality and then settle down to cook a frugal meal, usually of rice and dal. Sometimes, if they are lucky, they have a vegetable. They are supposed to eat only once a and are also supposed to shave their and wear white. Many refuse to mix people around owing to caste prejudi

A study conducted by the I Council of Social Science Research (on 440 widows indicated that nearly of them had taken to begging to body and soul together. The ICSSR p up 70 widows for an in-depth study. one was a matriculate. Nearly 99 per were illiterate. Their hard life had f them to some quite revolutionary clusions: 68 of the 70 wanted girls educated; 37 had no objection t education; 51 wanted child marriage abolished, 46 agreed to the idea of w remarriage. At the same time, 51 said they were sure that they would attai *ksha* and a solid 61 felt that they suffering because of "bad deeds" in previous birth.

Desperate to escape hunger's



A group of widows begging for food in the streets

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ead bowed in prayer by the
banks of the holy river

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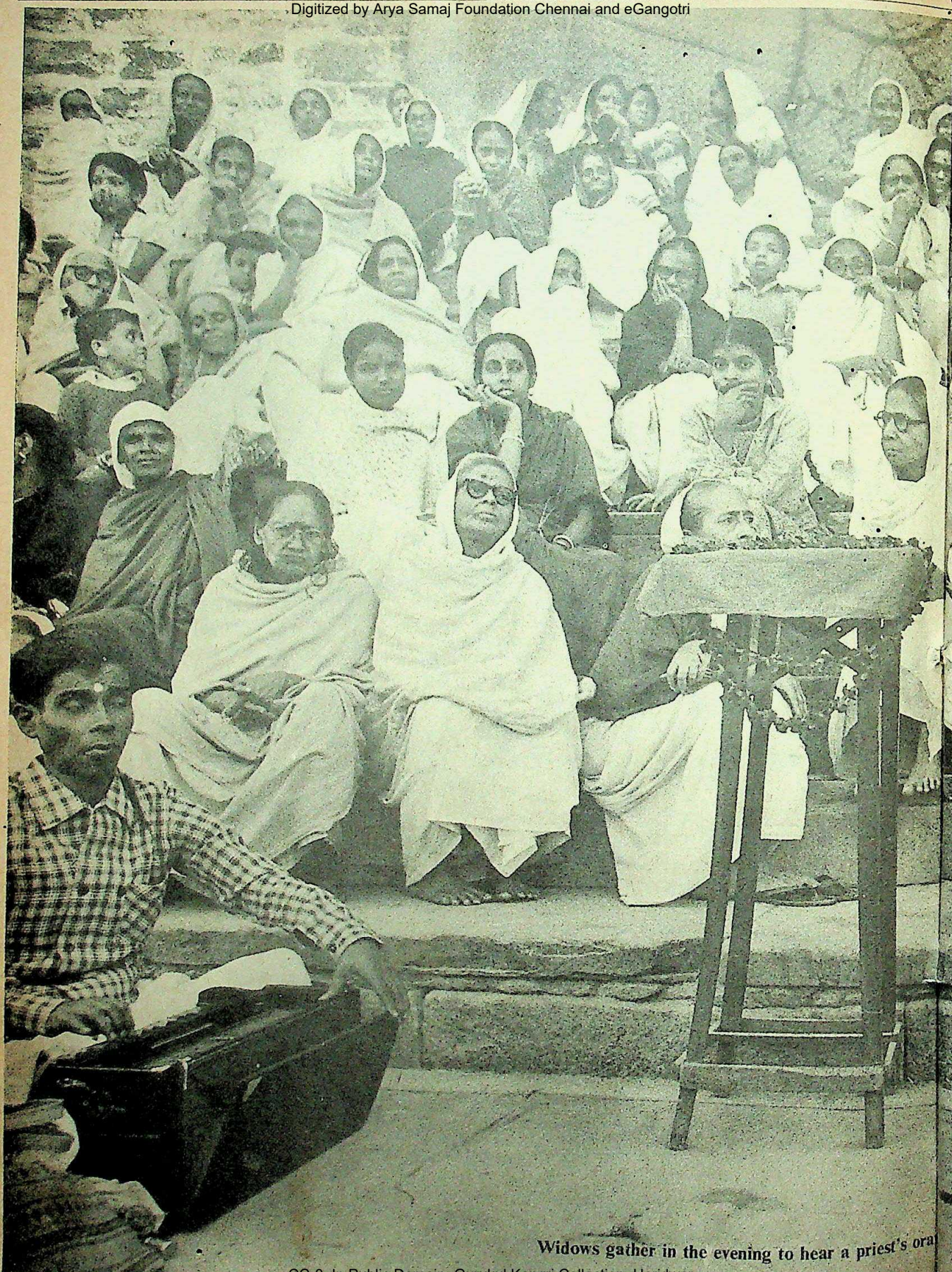

Widows gather in the evening to hear a priest's ora

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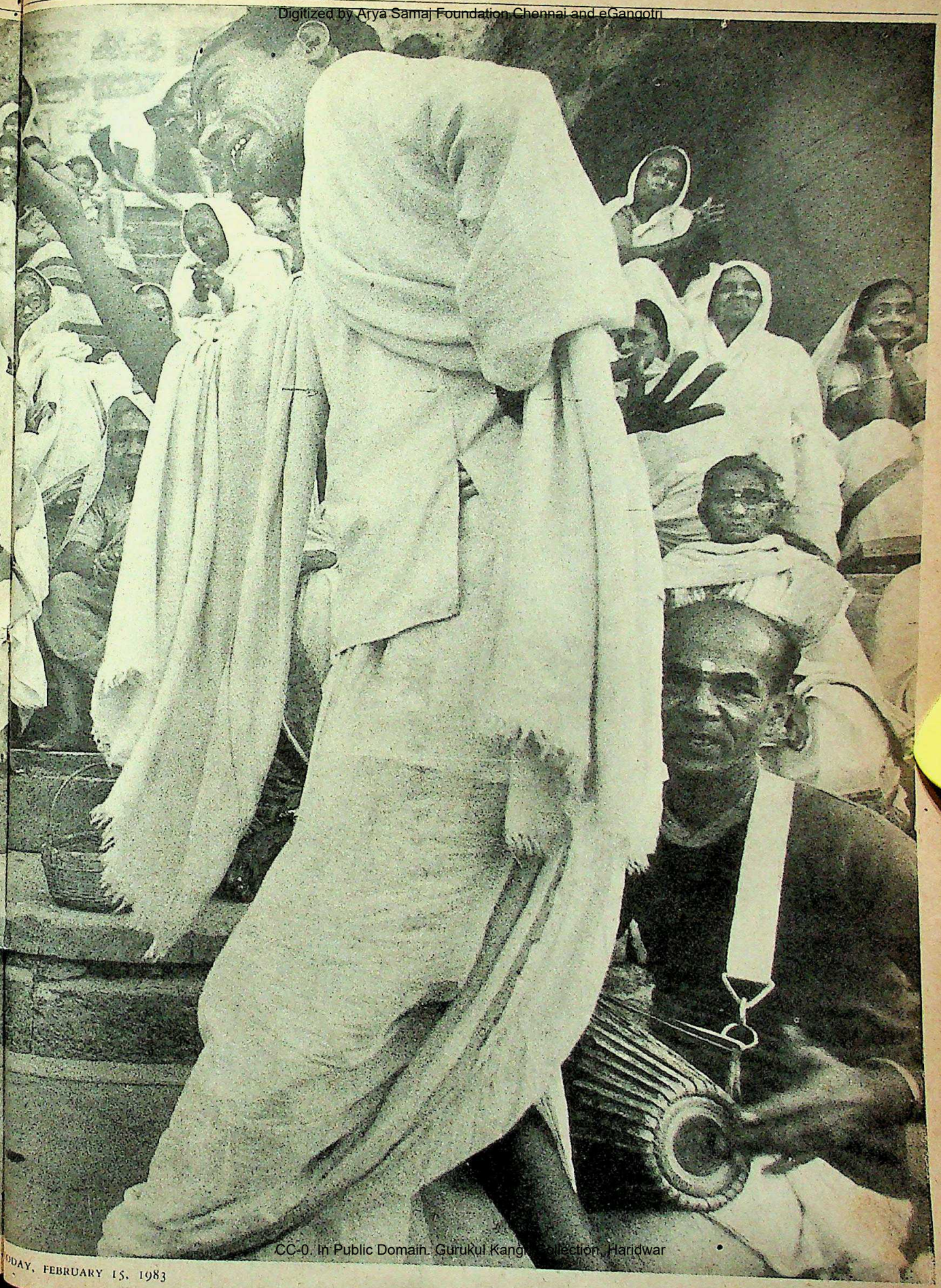

st's ora

UARY 15

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A widow employed as a cook: humiliating dependence

many strayed into prostitution, some f ing into the clutches of flesh traders. S Chandra Prakash Goyal, head of the cial work department, Kashi Vidyapee "In the '50s, a massive flesh racket o ated in Varanasi." With the help of Social Welfare Department, Goyal says succeeded in closing down numerous dow homes run by private organisati which purported to get the widows married" but were selling them to o ators who in their turn resold them brothels outside Varanasi.

The half-hearted scheme of the U Pradesh Government to give the wid an old-age pension of Rs 60 a month helped only a handful. Many of t complained that they could not get money as the officials charged with do it out were corrupt. Asked Parvati L 72: "How can I get pension? They ch Rs 125 for the application form to req for pension. I do not have money to buy today's food. Pension is only for widows."

Her outburst is borne out by ICSSR study which found that out of 440 widows only 56 got pension and n than 40 of them were undeserving c The pension, besides, is all too little. Manibala Dutt, 71: "How can we liv such a meagre pension? We have scrounge for food every day."

Reduced Influx: In recent years influx of widows has dwindled. Exp Tapan Kumar Ghosh, a resident of town: "In the '50s, a house could b nted for Rs 5 and monthly expenses c be managed within Rs 25. Many poo dows came for just this reason. Now town is as costly as any other place cause of the tourists." Adds Baidya Saraswati, a reputed anthropologist: influx of young widows has now bee duced to a trickle because of changin cial attitudes and will disappear in years to come."

Of the women wrecked by age society, shrunk to dry flesh and bon hunger and poverty, there remains, i metimes seems, just voices. Manoda 75, cast out by her daughter: "Dyin Kashi will liberate me from life." Prat 78: "My blood is drying up due to nger. I have suffered enough and pray death." Surodini Devi, 72, whose fa fled East Pakistan during Partition: " only counting my days." Neeradevi, formerly of Samastipur, Bihar and Varanasi for 30 years: "We are suffe because of the evil deeds in our past l Kashi might be the gateway to hea but for the poor, abandoned widows, undeniably a hell on earth.

—RAMESH MENON in Var

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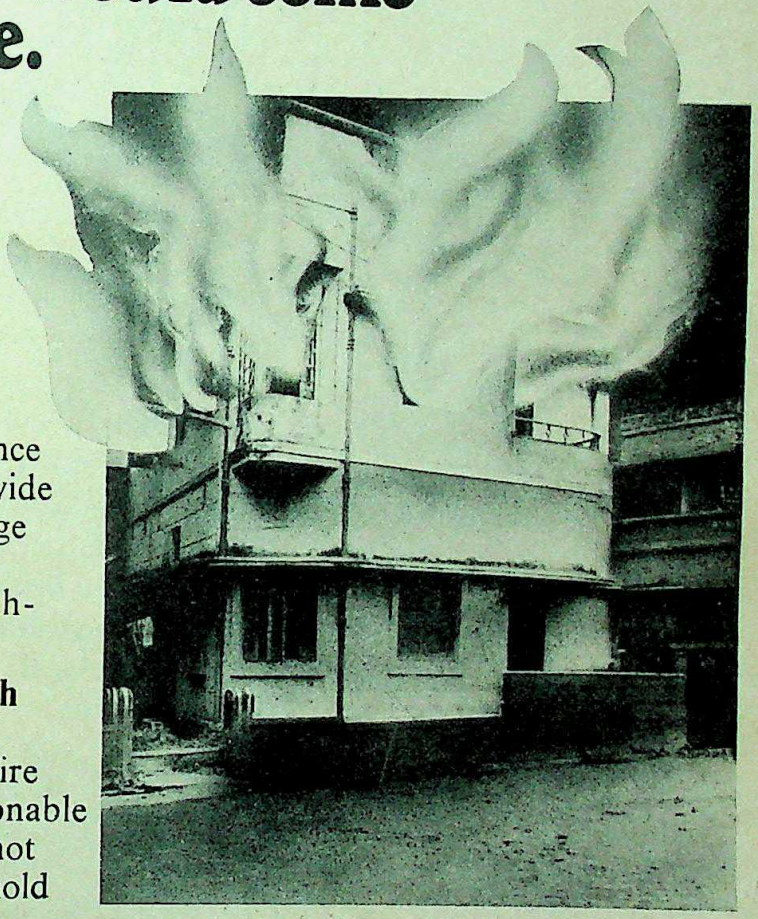

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Five-Star Galleries

ON THE ceiling of the lobby of the newly built Hotel Kanishka an octagon divides into 16 geometrical segments on which are painted, in M.F. Husain's inimitable style, stark figures in strong colours, inscriptions in bold calligraphy: a visual history of India since Kanishka's day commissioned by the new rulers for the new receptacle of art. Across Delhi in the equally imperial sounding Maurya Hotel hang Krishen Khanna's murals, at the Oberoi Intercontinental, Satish Gujral's. In Bombay's Oberoi Towers, a vast terracotta by B. Prabha and two more Gujral murals. Gujral's mural at the Oberoi Intercontinental in Delhi (1965) was the first instance of a hotel commissioning a major artist in India but we have come a long way from then and hotels today are among the major patrons of the visual arts.

And it is not just paintings and murals. The Taj in Bombay has always boasted of its collection of antiques but the hotel industry's contribution to the new culture goes beyond the mere acquisition of assorted artefacts and aesthetic quirks. All told it is a substantial contribution, its merit perhaps questionable, but substantial all the same.

Grand Indian hotels as we know them began with a snub. When Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata was asked to leave Watsons sometime towards the end of the last century on account of his being a native, he resolved to build an even grander hotel than the best Bombay knew then. Some years later in 1903 he built the Taj Mahal, complete with an electric laundry, Turkish baths, post office, chemist and resident doctor. About art he was less sure. Vetoing his son's suggestion that they use Morris wallpapers for the rooms, Tata wrote to his son that we must try to do what we think our customers would like. It was an excellent commercial principle and it is applied even today in the hotels but to different effect.

Changing Decor: In those days, hotels were places to stay in away from home and comfort and that mattered, not grandeur. Today hotels are by far the most lavishly decorated buildings in India. Earlier centuries favoured their temples, the first half of this century its legislatures and Rashtrapati Bhavans but if our quarter century is to bequeath its monuments to posterity they will most certainly be five-star hotels.

Not surprisingly, therefore, hotels have been pioneers in design in India. Ashoke Chatterjee, director of the National Institute of Design at Ahmedabad affirms: "The biggest single development in design in India occurred in a hotel." When in the early '70s India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) wanted another hotel in Delhi the Government twisted their arm into taking on a great white elephant the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) had on its hands. The structure that today houses the Akbar Hotel had been built by a disciple of Corbusier from Chandigarh, a remarkable structure in itself but no good as a hotel. The pre-stressed concrete it was built with meant that to effect even the most modest structural changes nothing short of dynamite would be required—and the raw concrete surfaces of the exterior and interior walls were at the time unanimously deemed too harsh for a luxury hotel. So after some anxious huddles ITDC got Dale Keller, the famous Hong Kong-based hotel designer from Taj Group's Ajit Kerkar, who had him over to design the Intercontinental wing of the Bombay Taj.

Earlier centuries favoured their temples, the first half of this century its legislatures and Rashtrapati Bhavans but if our quarter century is to bequeath its monuments to posterity they will most certainly be five-star hotels.

Says Chatterjee: "Keller introduced us to the system approach." With Keller's Akbar, the period of ad hoc design in India was over: the entire hotel had to be designed as a system: the crockery and the cutlery had to bear a relation to the architecture and the architecture to the bed sheets. Keller also introduced rural motifs to hotel design. In order to make the most of the raw surfaces of the building he introduced Madhubani paintings, *matkas* and glass bangles long before these came fashionable among interior dec tors.

But not everyone praises the hotels. Saeed Mirza's is a dissenting v For the past two years Mirza has trying to make a film with the some bald title *Five-star Hotel*. Mirza h got the money and may never. But h a damning script and several major a have been signed on. *Five-star* would involve a cast of at least 40 r roles: residents, staff, diners, loung zards, all these types would cavort i around one of the modern pleasur laces in an extravaganza that cannot but be a surreal comedy.

Why hotels? Says Mirza indigna "Because everything is up for sale t There is a new breed of people in I buccaneers and robber barons who characterised by their irreverence everything. The five-star hotel is the h specifically created for them." But the hotels in promoting good design prove public taste? "Design!" M exclaims, "the moment the des puts pom-poms on the waiter's he joins the ranks of Mussolin get to the truth one has to dro the facades of design." Mirza's real effects will try to capture of his indignation: beds that v slide projection screens instea windows and buttons in the loc presses for a mechanical hand the hotel becomes what Mirza bolically sees it as—the ult modern brothel.

Hoteliers deny this, dismi Mirza's vision as deranged. (Th course is perfectly consistent: M would expect them to.) "Our h are just aesthetic, not opulent," says Group Vice-president (Marke Camelia Panjabi. "It's just anothe dustry, in fact one that doesn't enjo tax incentives the rest of industry d She explains that the white marble ing favoured by her group's hotels tually the cheapest flooring, in the run.

Five-star hotels, Panjabi contends an obsession of the media. Says "There is no other country in which expression is used widely. It is a cla cation used within the industry but journalists have given it unnecessary currency. We are very strong on m research. We give the people what want." Perhaps, but surely there significant difference between five hotels and the other watering spots in country, one which language ough mirror.

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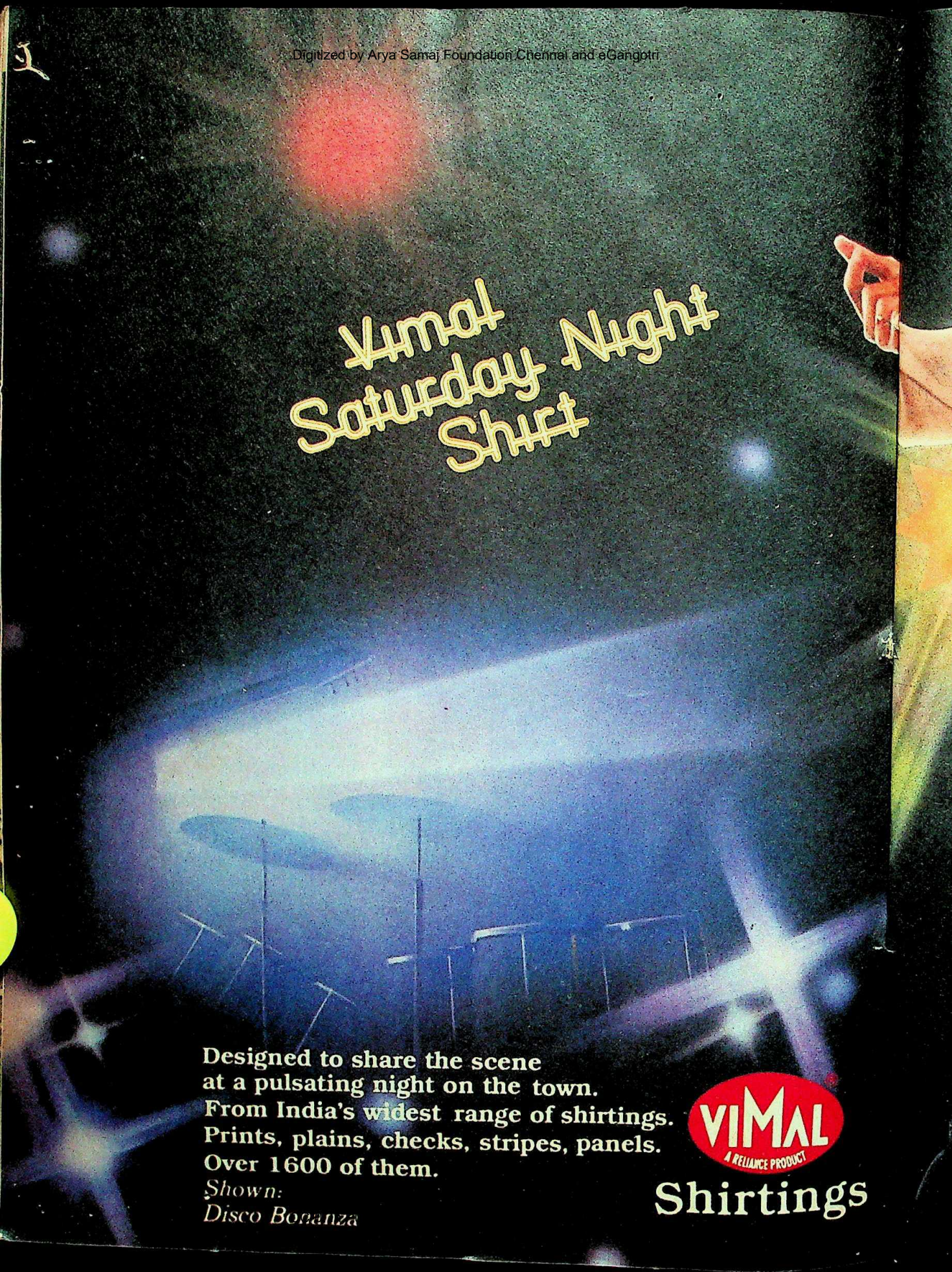

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AS

Historic Battle

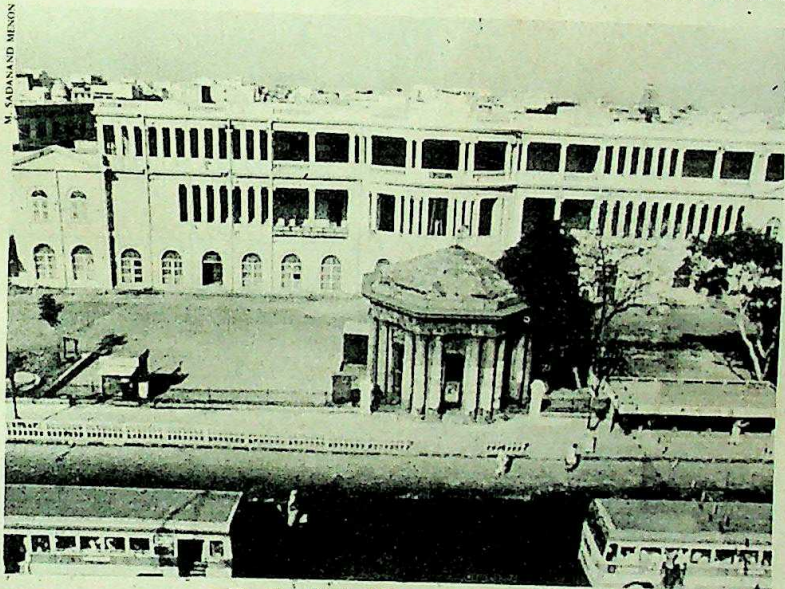
ROPOSALS to pull down old buildings of historical and architectural ue in Madras are invariably greeted loud protestations by conservatio- Although not a wall has yet been ed down, the mere mention of such lastic ideas has distressed art lovers re fighting a relentless battle to prelics of a bygone era.

he latest suggestion to upset the conlonists' applecart has been the State ering Department's plan to raze the ing 200-year-old Bentinck's building uild a new multi-storeyed office com- its place. Spearheading the oppo- to the Government's proposed de- n programmes is the ear-old amorphous ation for Environ- Protection and Con- on of Historics, Ma- The association, for- n reaction to the ys' plan to pull another historical rk—the famed sho- centre of Moore right in the heart city—to make way panding the Madras Station, is deter- to oppose such de- n plans. The secre- d the principal mo- force behind the tion, Dr Nandita a, says that the asso- will soon get toge- discuss the nascent al to bring down the k's building and submit a memo- to the state Government.

Krishna says that the association to seek the good offices of the Nadu Chief Minister, M.G. Rama- an, to prevent damage to buildings es of historical value. Last fort- Mrs Indira Gandhi also reportedly he chief minister not to go ahead e Bentinck demolition plan. Dr feels that "every structure of the period is an integral part of the of Madras," but the state Govern- ems to be overlooking this. "No- re seems to be sensitive to such iss- ys she. But the association's efforts ie such proposals have not been unsuccessful. For the moment Dr draws some comfort from the ul, though temporary, stalling of the demolition of Moore Market.

Developing Awareness: Another ardent historian and conservationist, S. Muthiah, a business executive, draws attention to the fact that the Railways have been forced to hold over the project of pulling down Moore Market by no less than three years by creating a popular awareness of the historical value of the place. Says he: "Though the Tamil Nadu Government has long since handed over the market area to the Railways, the latter haven't, as yet, pulled down the first stall in the historical shopping complex."

Muthiah, who is the author of the book *Madras Discovered*, points out that the Moore Market, like the New Market of Calcutta and the Crawford Market of Bombay, represents an ethos. Giving a practical suggestion, he advises that the market be built into the suburban railway terminal building that is planned to come up at the site. "After all, a variegated shopping complex is perfectly consistent with the idea of a railway station and terminal," he observes.



M. SADANAND MENON

Bentinck's building: in danger

Muthiah is vociferous in his defence of Bentinck's building. Constructed at the turn of the 18th Century when Lord Bentinck was the Governor of Madras, the building has provided shelter to several institutions. From 1817 onwards, it housed what was then the Greater Court of Madras or the Supreme Court. The institution of the Supreme Court was abolished in 1862 and replaced by the High Court, which was the next to occupy the impressive Victorian building. The High Court stayed there until 1892 when another structure was ready to house the judiciary. Since then, the building has been the site of the offices of the Madras Collectorate and now also the Mercantile Marine Department.

Official View: The reason given for the demolition plans of the old Bentinck's building is to make way for a new multi-storeyed governmental office complex. Muthiah criticises this idea and points out the lack of infra-structural facilities like water supply in the already congested area. He counters the official argument of the state of decrepitude and disrepair of the building by insisting that the sturdiness of such primeval architectural structures is underestimated. He says: "Mere disrepair is not the sole provocation for the state Government's anxiety to pull the mammoth edifice down. If that were so, why did the Government recently think aloud on razing down the still strong and rugged architectural marvel of the Fort Museum to create some space for the expansion of the adjacent State Secretariat?"

However, H.M. Singh, vice-chairman of the Madras Metropolitan Development Authority, expounds a different view. "What is the use of maintaining all these historical sites for the sake of mere preservation?" he argues. "A Qutab Minar and a Red Fort can understandably be looked after; but certainly not every rickety and tottering structure." Singh contends that there will always be competing demands on the space of an expanding city. And growth —which leads to the need for more houses, offices and factories—is bound to demand the sacrifice of some old architectural monuments.

Muthiah disagrees with this view. "There are vast empty spaces in the suburbs of every city, which is where every metropolis should expand and grow to the accompaniment of adequate transport facilities," he says. "The replacement of the existing vast historical bungalows by mushrooming skyscrapers will only add to the congestion of the already crowded cities." As the heated debate between the city planners and the conservationists continues, the fate of the old monuments remains undecided. —S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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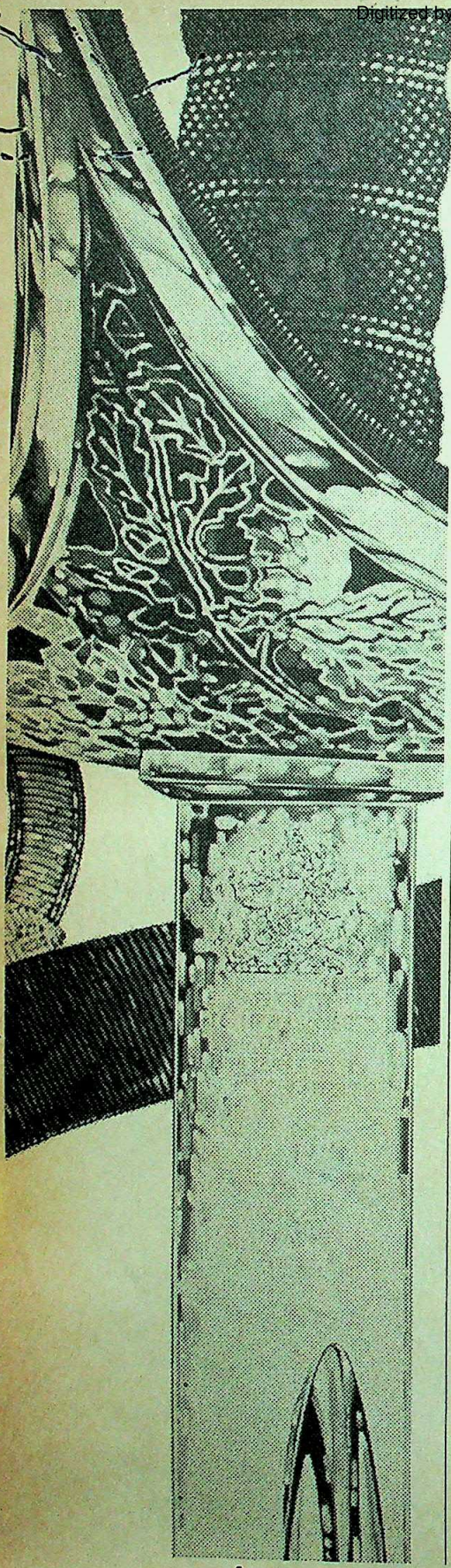

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HYDERABAD TEST

The Depths Of Despair

IT IS becoming monotonously depressing to watch the Indian cricketers perform. After the humiliating set-backs in Karachi and Faisalabad, one expected the Indians to indulge in some self-analysis of the conscience-pricking type. Tragically, nothing of the sort seems to have happened. Hyderabad (Sind), yet another of those below-par Test locales, is one place that has a genuine soft corner for India and the Indians, largely because it is the stronghold of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party who are agitating for a return to democracy. But that, at the moment, seems as wishful a thought as the Indian team coming into their own on the present tour.

For Sunil Gavaskar, the Indian captain, nothing seems to be going right. Even before he went out for the toss, he had to face the misfortune of having to send Madan Lal back home for an operation on his heel. Sandeep Patil pulled a muscle and if that wasn't enough, Gavaskar called wrong. Misfortunes never come singly, they say. Then, Mudassar Nazar and Javed Miandad added to Gavaskar's miseries with well-grafted double-centuries. During their world record-equalling partnership—they will now be referred to in the same statistical breath as Bradman and Ponsford—they had the Indian bowlers, and fielders, at their mercy. It was painful to watch such a massacre. Of course, the placid Niaz Stadium wicket didn't help the Indian cause. In the circumstances, it was inevitable that Gavaskar's captaincy should come in for some heavy criticism.

I have always believed that a captain can only lead as well as he is allowed to by his team-mates. During the course of Pakistan's mammoth 581 for 3, there was very little coordination between the Indian captain and his bowlers and fielders. It appeared as if nobody was interested in playing in a Test atmosphere. I have known huge scores against the Indians in the past, but never such a one-sided contest, thoughtless application and listless involvement. It was difficult to pinpoint anybody individually. The morale of the team is sinking rapidly and it cannot be far from rock-bottom.

Poor Performance: Travelling in and out of Pakistan keeps one in close contact with sentiments of cricket followers at home. One doesn't notice the fluctuations in public image when one is an active performer. Gavaskar, Vishwanath, Kapil Dev, Patil and Kirmani are all household names, now being rubbed in the dust with inglorious ease. I have gone through it all myself but I am unable to recall Indian cricket having taken more serious jolts in the recent past. It would be grossly unfair to blame any one individual. The entire unit stands guilty and they should the courage to own up to it. In Hy bad, India were beaten by the bi margin possible—an innings. In Mudassar and Sarfraz were allowed whatever they wanted. But that is e how the Indians went into the game.

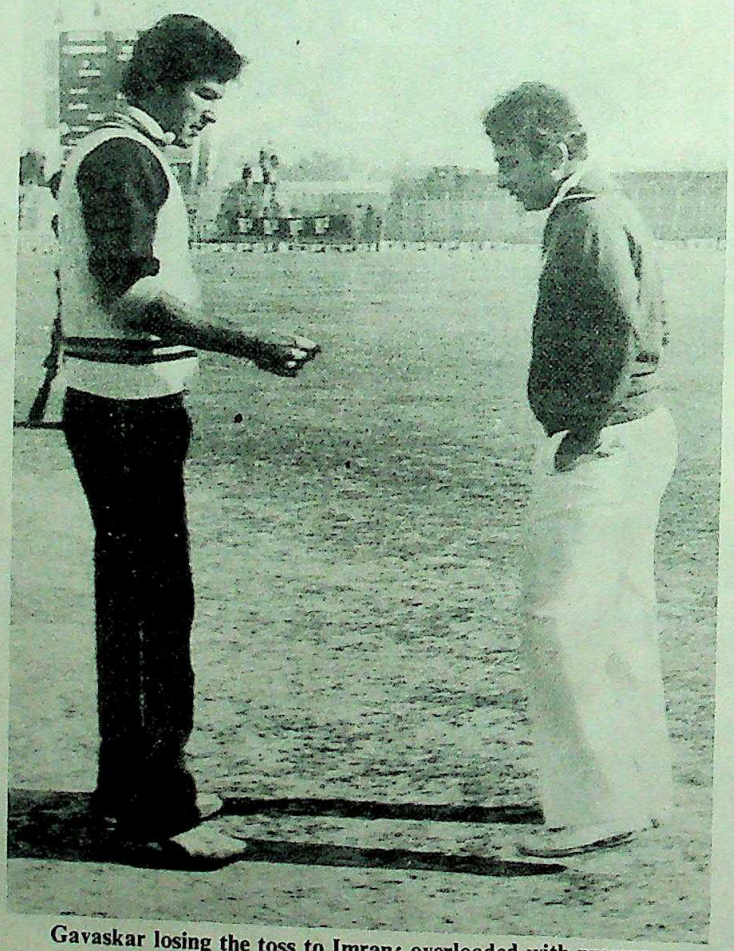
According to reliable sources, h team is not even interested in the ga lot of them are already talking abou trip to the West Indies. That, for lover of the game, is a preposterous s tion. It is all very well to blast the fai but what about those who are not trying to make their way into the t The phrase "team spirit" is a cruel jo

Performance-wise (if such a term fits the present touring side), Balw Sandhu and Mohinder Amarnath em creditably from the ruins. The fo making his Test debut with exem courage and the latter ma up for the time lost to cricket in recent years.

Astonishing Attitude: nkly, the "I'm-alright-J attitude of the Indian is astonishing. Any for selfishness is unforgivable game like cricket but seems to be nothing else pening both on and off field. It is a pity that players should have decid this most inopportune of to suggest "gradation and ments" for future tours t cricket board. Whoever's it was obviously has concern for Indian crick the long run.

It is quite clear that of the senior Indian crick cannot digest some of youngsters enjoying the commercial benefits of dern cricket. It is tragic there should be a differ of opinion at this parti stage and a motion to d the side into the "haves" the "have-nots". The in dual mercenary instinct Indian cricket is clearly ting out of control.

However, there are a conscientious members of team who are prepared to themselves whether they



Gavaskar losing the toss to Imran: overloaded with pressure

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Rs 50,000 for the West Indian tour, of Rs 20,000 from the present ous tour. Logically, performance ot seniority should be the basic cri- for gradation and remunerations.

ECHNICALLY speaking, Indian cricketers are amateurs despite the fact that at Test level make as much hay, even the sun is not shining. esent tour isn't too bli- cricket-wise but what ncial bonanza. Some rs of the team are al asking each other how e out surplus Pakistani Our boys can never be professionals for the reason that all or most of them are rolls of some commercial firm and et regular salaries when on national ernational duty. Indian cricketers ever had it so good financially. All eed now is to put their heads down ow the same kind of greed for per- nce.

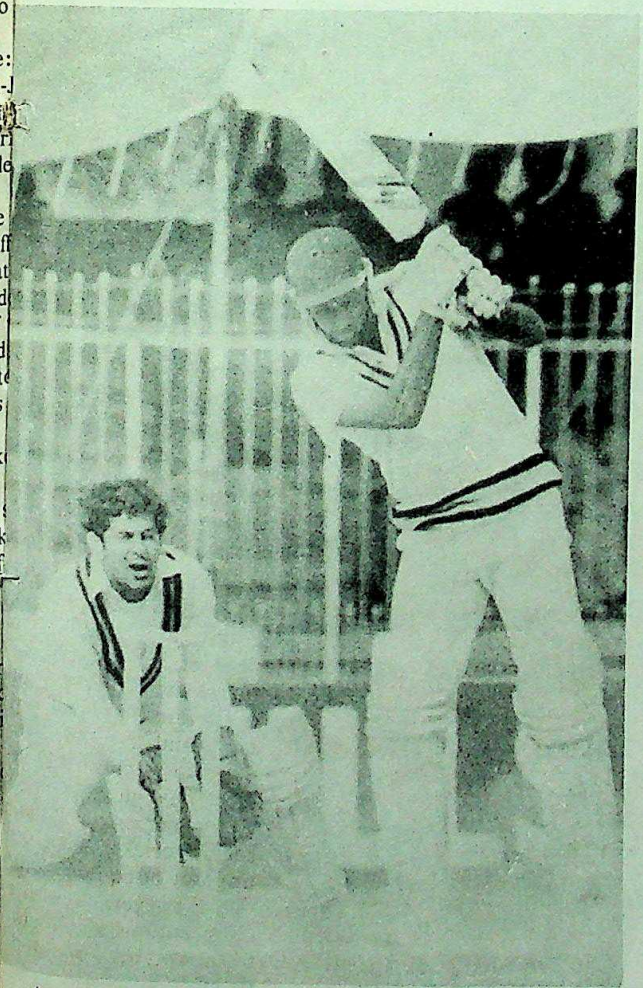
There is another disturbing factor which might have contributed towards the dismal nature of the tour. It would be unfair to directly criticise the two gentlemen accompanying the team as manager and deputy. Both Fatehsingh Rao Gaekwad and Ojha are refined, cultured gentlemen who have achieved eminence in their own right. But their utility on a cricket tour, particularly in Pakistan, is being talked about unkindly.

Indian cricketers have never had it so good financially. All they need now is to put their heads down and show the same kind of greed for performance.

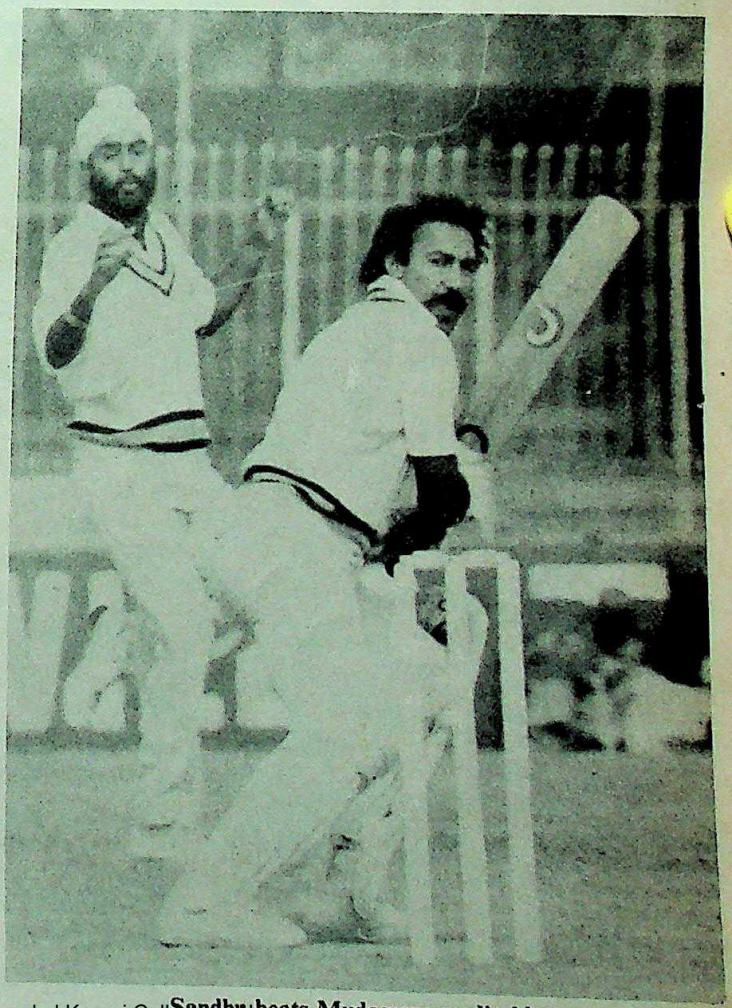
Purely from a cricketing point of view, it is being felt very strongly among the players that the need for a regular and professional manager cannot be emphasised more. Raj Singh, who went as manager to England last summer, echoed the same views. This is where Imran has a distinct edge over Gavaskar. The Pakistani captain can entrust major cricketing matters and decisions to Intekhab Alam if he wants to, while poor Gavaskar finds himself very lonely at times. Particularly now that this series has already been decided, Gavaskar will have few shoulders to lean on for sympathy.

Overburdened Captain: After the Hyderabad Test, Gavaskar came on television and what a shattered person he was. It would be hard to imagine that he has many friends at the moment, but few realise how heavily he is overloaded with pressures. As if his own batting form was not enough of a concern, the cooperation he got from the rest of the team was hardly encouraging either. Both Gavaskar and Kapil agree that a more active and professional manager would have eased a lot of their problems.

Staying in the same hotel as the Indian team, one has the benefit of listening to some



Amarnath drives off the back foot: consistency



Sandhu beats Mudassar: creditable

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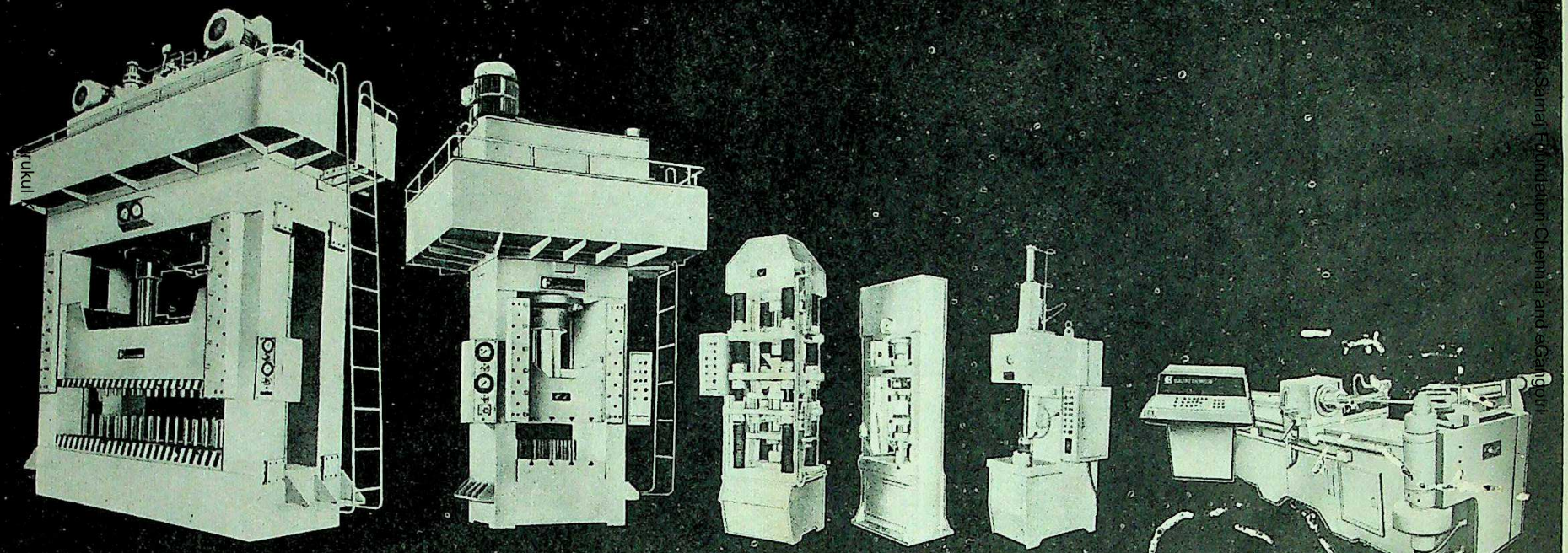

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tales of India woes. But when you ing as badly as on the present tour, xcuse links with another and it is lt to separate the two.

t is an acknowledged fact that Pakistan toughest tour to undertake. On the any touring side would have gh time against the present an line-up. But it is the acute om off the field that makes a this part of the world extre- hard to bear. The Indian ger feels that this tour is subdued than the one in 1978 y because of the decision of oard of Control for Cricket istan to engage a contractor, means that the role of local ations is nil.

Conservative Society: From personal ence, the 1978 tour was far more en- stic. But even then, the kind of social e Indian team expected and anticipated missing. It is worse now. Pakistan is lly a highly conservative and male- ed society. The usual glamour that one ates with a cricket tour is lacking here. It is more like a regiment going to a field area. If ever the Indian team needed female company for relaxation, it is on this tour.

Personally, I am against wives touring with the players for some very valid reasons. But an exception should definitely be made in the case of a Pakistan tour. Having said that, I am not sure whether the few wives who are presently with the Indian team are helping the cause of Indian cricket. Gavaskar's wife has been his constant companion on tours, and, if I may say so, a great source of inspiration and encouragement for him. But even he cannot fully agree with the idea of wives travelling with the team. "Some of the newly-weds are a total loss to the team. We hardly see them once they come off the field," is his caustic remark. One must agree with him. Some of the wives are [illegible] ly demanding with the result that [illegible] tently cricket involvement suffers.

On the field, any touring side would have a rough time against the present Pakistan line-up. But it is the acute boredom off the field that makes a trip to this part of the world extremely hard to bear.

It would help if the Board were to stipulate a period of time that a wife can be with her touring husband. If some of the Board's policy decisions were streamlined, Indian cricket would be in a far happier situation. But for the present it would be enough to "hope that in the remaining two Tests, there would be fewer pressures for the Indians". That remark comes from one well-wisher of Indian cricket, Omar Qureshi, a tremendous cricket writer and commentator and one of the most lovable "snobs" in Pakistan. Qureshi's hope has been fulfilled in the current Lahore Test to some extent by the Indian performance with the bat and ball, till the time of writing, but it is clearly a case of too little too late.

Imran bowls Kapil Dev in the Hyderabad test: one-sided contest

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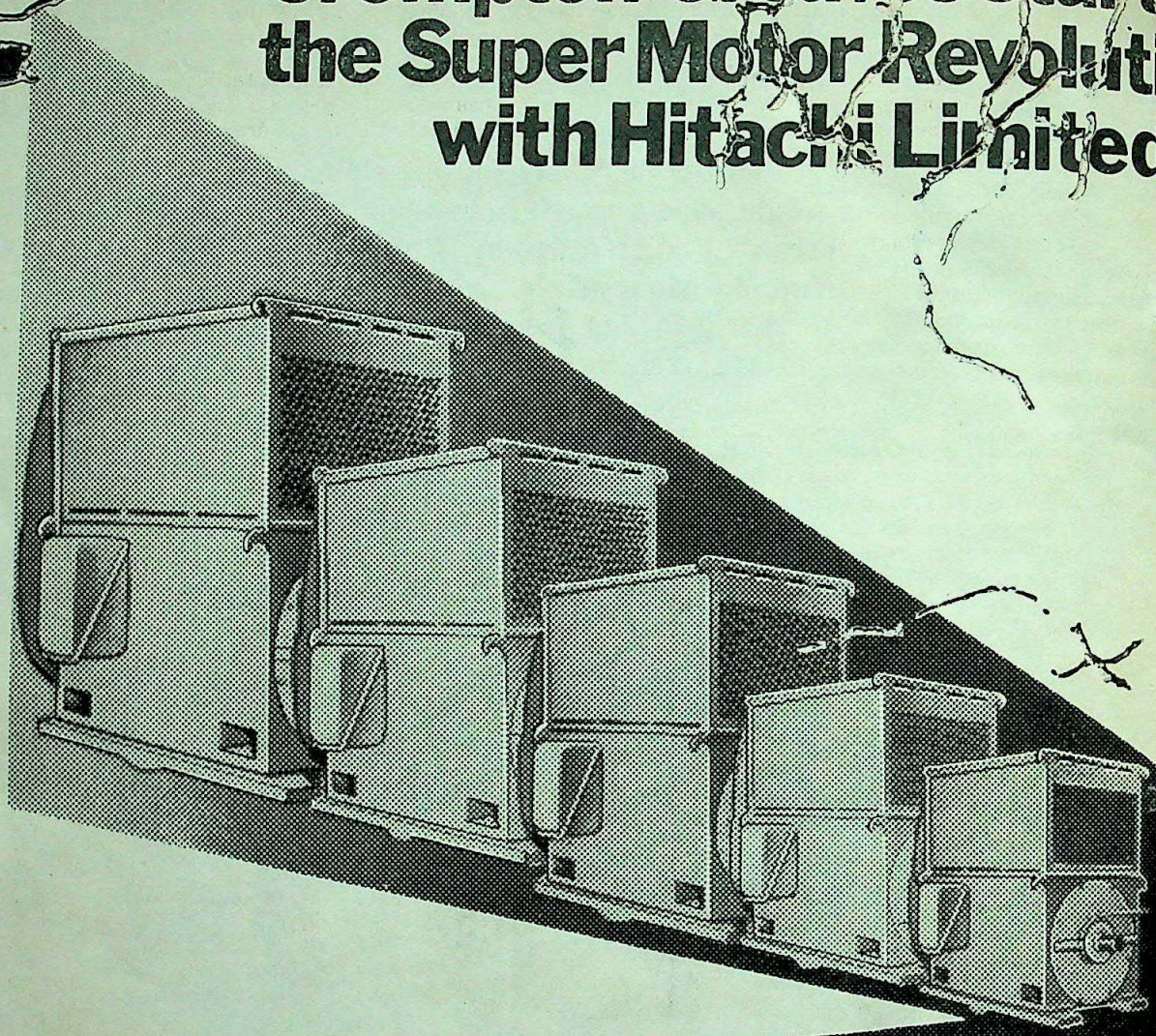

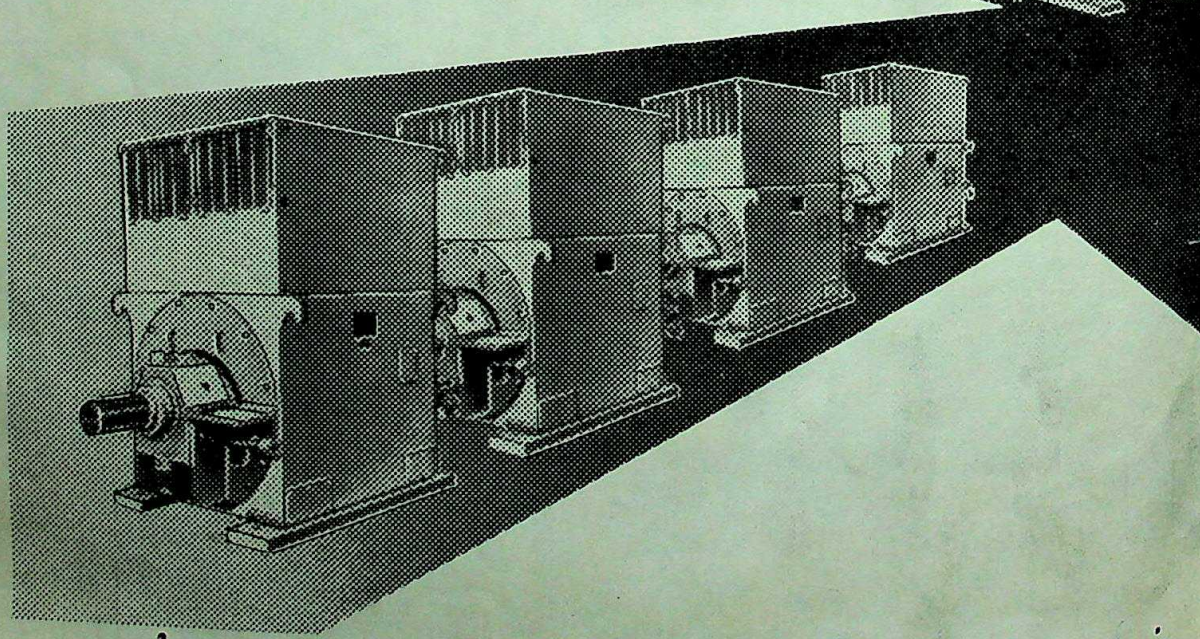

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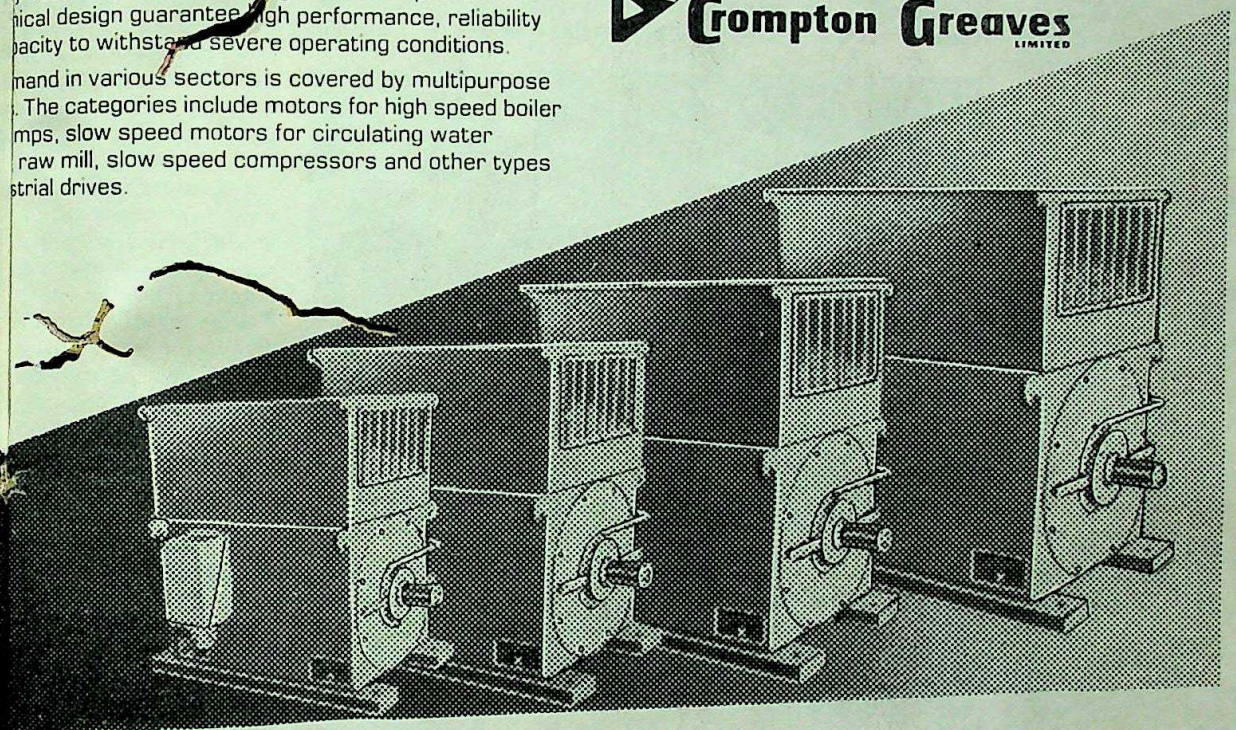

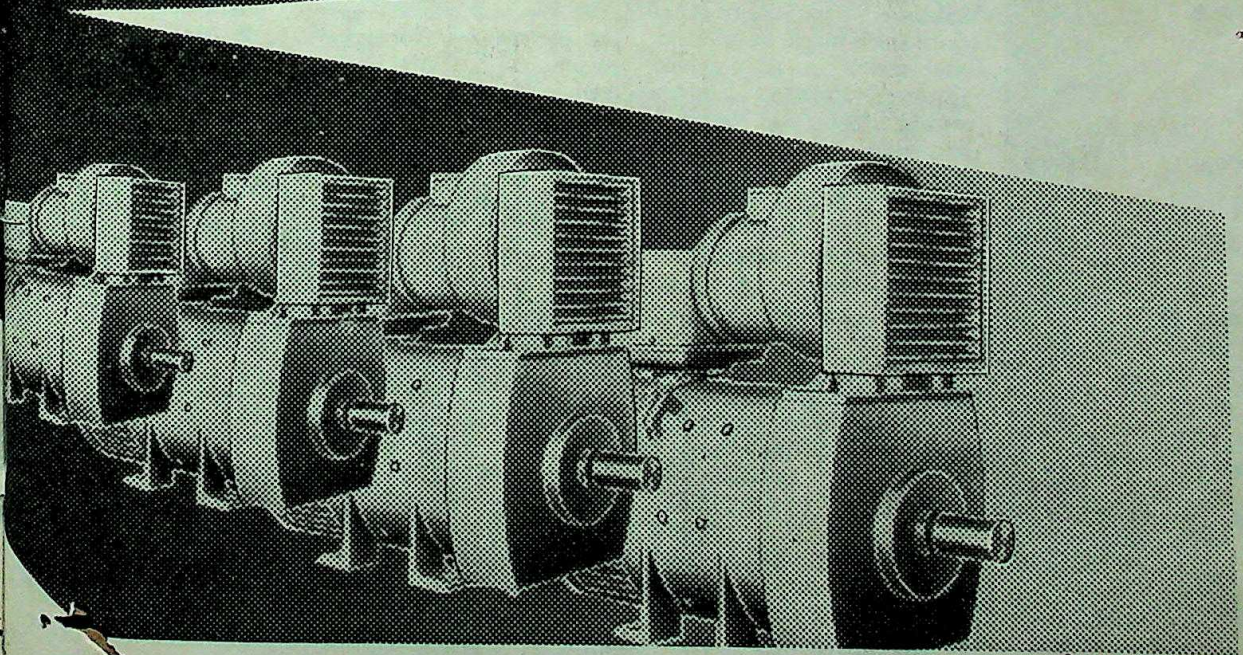

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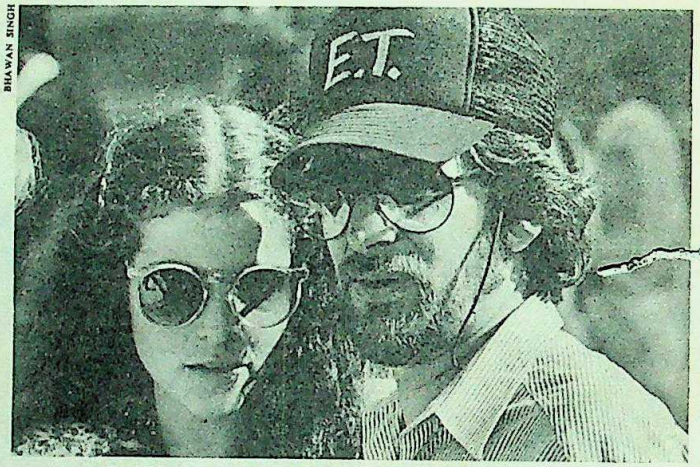
■ It was one of the dogs that fa[illegible]d. Nobody is sure if it is Lallu or Kallu. At least not [illegible]ukherjee, 40, their [illegible] the singer-wife of [illegible]ab Mukherjee, the high-powered Union Minister for Finance. But one of two pets, one a white Labrador with a highly suspect pedigree and the other pie-dog the colour of stale tea, jumped its leash and attacked a gentleman out on a morning walk down Jantar Mantar Road, where the Mukherjees live. Lallu (or is it Kallu) did not particularly approve of the sight of Lolly, the three-year-old Lhasa that trotted with the gentleman. And his scent was right, for the master of Lolly was none other than **Atal Behari Vajpayee**, president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Mukherjee's severest critic in the Parliament. As Vajpayee tried to parry the canine onslaught, the highly motivated Lallu dug his teeth into his finger, slicing off the flesh half-an-inch deep.

While Vajpayee rushed to the doctor for a shot of anti-rabies vaccine Shubhra Mukherjee seemed not a whit apologetic for her Lallu's misplaced valour. Said she with all the authority of a ministerial housewife: "My dog is innocent." "Yap, yap," said the assembled attendants, testifying to their mistress' dogged denial.

BHAWAN SINGH

Vajpayee and pets: dog day

■ He is small and infectiously effervescent. His face is partly covered by a neatly-trimmed blond beard and his head covered by a sporty cap with *E.T.* blazoned across it in bright yellow. Attired in a pair of faded Levis, he could well pass off for a college-going kid out on an adventure. But at 34, **Steven Spielberg** is a millionaire whose name spells magic on celluloid. And there's no denying that Spielberg's uncanny ability to translate childhood fantasies into celluloid in films like *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and finally *E.T.* have made the man a legendary film maker. Last fortnight Spielberg was in India location-hunting for his next film—a sequel to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Naturally, he stopped by in Jaipur to meet girlfriend **Amy Irving**, who is also shooting for the film version of M.M. Kaye's bestseller *The Far Pavilions*. The whizz-kid of American film industry, refused to divulge details of his next venture, which will also be shot in China, but with him involved, it should be out of this world.



BHAWAN SINGH

Spielberg with Irving: weaving another fantasy

■ Veteran film actor **Dilip Kumar** seems to be playing out some torrid [illegible] life roles. Having secretly married a Hyderabadi div[illegible] socialite, **Asma**, late last year, Dilip came in for a barrage of criticism and sympathy for long-standing first wife Saira Banu. But last fortnight the man who has over the years reduced his movie fans to tears through his celluloid histrionics, left second wife Asma, wailing. He ended his brief and controversial marriage to Asma, leaving the film world aghast. While both parties maintained a studied silence, Dilip issued turgid statements like "We part with the fullest respect for each other" and "We have mutually dissolved the marriage for entirely personal reasons" it is clear that there is more than what meets the eye. Asma's brother Adil who accompanied her a[illegible] left Dilip's Pali Hi[illegible] where she was staying said: "Whatever happened very unfortu[illegible] But we very [illegible] people Yusuf [illegible] is a big ma[illegible]

Asma (left) and Dilip and Saira: all's [illegible]?

SIGN POSTS

■ **Died:** Pilloo Mody, [illegible]anata Party leader and R[illegible] Sabha MP, of a heart att[illegible]

■ **Awarded:** Producer-di[illegible]tor Sir Richard Attenboro[illegible] co-winner of the 1983 Ma[illegible] Luther King Jr non-vio[illegible] peace prize for his film *Ga[illegible]* based on the life of Maha[illegible] Gandhi. Attenborough is [illegible] first European and the first [illegible] maker to receive the award.

■ **Awarded:** Naval H. T[illegible] prominent industrialist, [illegible] award for his exceptional [illegible]vices in promoting emplo[illegible] employee relationships.

■ **Awarded:** Acharya Vi[illegible] Bhave, the Bharat Ratna, [illegible]thumously. Among the [illegible]minent Padma Bhushan a[illegible] winners were Malayalam [illegible] actor Prem Nazir, Kannad[illegible]tor Rajkumar, philanth[illegible] and industrialist Swraj [illegible] and Raja Bhalindra Singh.

■ **Honoured:** Arun Sho[illegible] Magsaysay award winner [illegible] former executive editor [illegible] *Indian Express*, by the Un[illegible]sity of California, Berkeley [illegible] being invited to deliver its [illegible]nual Regent's Lecture.

■ **Married:** Indian tennis [illegible] Vijay Amritraj to Shyama[illegible] Madras. She is the daughter [illegible] prominent industrialist.

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